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## **Anachronisms: Accidental Evidence in Book of Mormon Criticisms**

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### **Chapter 2: Warfare in the Book of Mormon**

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# Anachronisms: Accidental Evidence in Book of Mormon Criticisms

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**Matthew Roper**

**[Editor's Note:** *We are pleased to present chapter 2 from a book entitled Anachronisms: Accidental Evidence in Book of Mormon Criticisms. It is presented in serialized form in this volume of Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship.*]

## **Chapter 2: Warfare in the Book of Mormon**

**A**ccounts of warfare in the Book of Mormon have also been the focus of criticism. In 1834, Eber Howe dismissed the accounts in the book of Alma as entirely overblown and lacking any historical credibility or authenticity. According to Howe,

The knight errantry of Don Quixote bears no parallel, nor does the history of the Peloponnesian wars speak of such generals, nor of such brave achievements, as the Book of Alma.—Besides, in the sixty-nine years, many large cities were founded and built, fortifications were erected, military costumes of great splendor were manufactured and worn.—Their implements of war consisted of swords, spears, scimitars, javelins, bows and arrows, slings, etc. We can see no propriety in the omission by the author of the use of guns and ammunition. We think it would have been as credible as most of the events of the narrative.<sup>1</sup>

It is not clear what Howe meant by “military costumes of great

splendor.” Presumably, this refers to the headplates and breastplates introduced on a wider scale by Captain Moroni, which Howe assumed must have been made of metal (Alma 43:38, 44). Another writer, who had clearly never read the Book of Mormon, dismissed it because (as he mistakenly claimed) the text mentions “gunpower” and “pistols and other fire-arms” in an ancient American setting.<sup>2</sup> The numbers of battle deaths have been seen by some as unrealistic and too high.<sup>3</sup> Others claim that the kinds of weapons mentioned in the text were never used in pre-Columbian times.<sup>4</sup> For years, accounts of large-scale, high-stakes warfare in ancient America were considered entirely out of place and rejected by many mainstream archaeologists.<sup>5</sup> Thus, for a time, some readers echoed the once-popular view that the ancient Maya were essentially peaceful and did not engage in significant warfare until a few centuries before the Spanish Conquest.<sup>6</sup>

Subsequent research and new discoveries about pre-Columbian culture and history required these earlier views to be revised, substantially modified, or abandoned altogether. For warfare, the degree of confirmation is judged based on known historical and cultural precedent or archaeological discoveries.

## 1. Fortifications

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

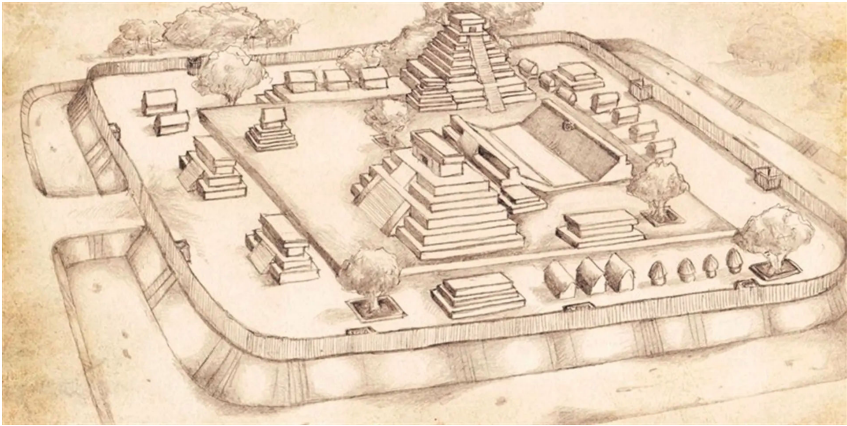
**Critics’ Claim:** The Book of Mormon indicates that various kinds of fortifications were constructed (Alma 48:8–9; 49:2–4; 50:1–4). Some critics have claimed that the descriptions of fortifications in the Book of Mormon are implausible or inconsistent with evidence from ancient America.<sup>7</sup>

**Response:** Archaeological discoveries now show many examples of Mesoamerican fortifications that are similar to those described in the Book of Mormon text (figure 15).<sup>8</sup> Some examples date to the time of the Book of Mormon.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Early Warfare

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics’ Claim:** Warfare was common in the Book of Mormon from an early period and throughout much of its history (2 Nephi 5:34; Enos 1:24; Jarom 1:3; Omni 1:3, 10; Alma 16:1; 62:44; Helaman 4:4; Mormon 1:8). Some critics have claimed that warfare in any meaningful sense



**Figure 15.** Mesoamerican fortification.

was never practiced in ancient America until just a few centuries before the arrival of the Europeans. According to one writer, “Warfare in any recognizable pattern did not have any prominence until several hundred years after the Book of Mormon is supposed to have finished, and then it certainly was not the warfare that is portrayed in the Book of Mormon in either purpose or method.”<sup>10</sup> According to the same author,

The whole concept of warfare in the Book of Mormon is foreign to known patterns. Wars of conquest were unknown for the simple reason that the gaining of new territory for occupation was unknown. There was plenty of room for all. When warfare for conquest did emerge, it was during the Aztec period when these strange people started to prey upon their neighbors for the purpose of capturing prisoners to serve as human sacrifices.<sup>11</sup>

“Archaeologists,” states another, “assert that, during the Book of Mormon period, warfare was almost totally unknown in the Americas, except for ceremonial purposes (as practiced by the Aztecs).”<sup>12</sup> Another describes the Book of Mormon’s accounts of warfare as being “diametrically opposed” to the evidence from Mesoamerican archaeology.<sup>13</sup> As late as 1989, one writer claims,

Although the Maya are believed, on the evidence of wall paintings, to have made occasional raids on other people, possibly to obtain sacrificial victims, they were on the whole a peaceful people. Their ceremonial centres had no

fortifications, and were for the most part located in places incapable of defence.<sup>14</sup>

**Response:** Research shows that the ancient Maya — once thought by scholars to have been relatively peaceful — were extremely warlike. Warfare, sometimes very serious and socially altering warfare, was a significant part of their culture.<sup>15</sup>

In 2005, Mayan archaeologist David Webster wrote,

Right up through the late 1960s most archaeologists still bought heavily into the ‘peaceful Maya’ perspective. Classic Mesoamerican societies (AD 250–900) were more generally envisioned as both peaceful and theocratic, and no one thought about Preclassic (2500 BC–AD 250) war at all. Leaving aside those pugnacious Mexicans and Maya who lived in the few centuries prior to the arrival of the Spaniards, ancient Mesoamerica seemed to be singularly free of conflict (except for a bit of raiding for sacrificial victims), thus contrasting strongly with virtually every other early civilization.<sup>16</sup>

Then a major shift in these views occurred. “Today, in a startling turnabout, warfare is all the rage. The Maya are often portrayed as compulsively warlike.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, “The ‘peaceful Maya’ were not peaceful at all” and “prove to have been warlike to their deepest Preclassic roots.”<sup>18</sup> Reasons for this change include archaeological evidence for ancient fortifications, research on monumental art illuminating Mesoamerican weaponry, and the decipherment of Mayan inscriptions, which include many words associated with warfare.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. Wars of Conquest

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics’ Claim:** The text speaks of wars of conquest in the Book of Mormon (Alma 43:4–8; 44:8). Some critics have claimed that wars of conquest were unknown to ancient Americans.<sup>20</sup>

**Response:** It is now known that wars of conquest were a common element of Mesoamerican culture.<sup>21</sup> According to Mayanist Simon Martin, warfare could take various forms in Mesoamerica. The objectives of combatants could include simply “making a show of force and testing the strength of a rival, to efforts at their complete conquest or annihilation.”<sup>22</sup>

#### 4. Armor

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** Armor became an important component of Jaredite and Nephite warfare (Mosiah 21:7; Alma 3:5; 43:21; 46:13, 21; 3 Nephi 3:26; 4:7). Some critics have claimed that reference to armor in pre-Columbian times is erroneous.<sup>23</sup>

**Response:** Various types of native armor are described in Spanish historical sources of battles and shown in Mesoamerican art going back to the Preclassic period.<sup>24</sup> According to Ross Hassig, “quilted cotton armor (*ichcahuipilli*) was a common element of battle attire in Mesoamerica . . . it was constructed of unspun cotton tightly stretched between two layers of cloth and sewn to a leather border.” Extending to the mid-thigh, this armor “was so thick (one and a half to two fingers) that neither an arrow nor an atlatl dart could penetrate it.”<sup>25</sup>

#### 5. Pre-Columbian Swords

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** The Book of Mormon has numerous references to “swords” (Omni 1:2; Mosiah 9:16; 10:8; Alma 2:12; 43:18, 20; 60:2; Helaman 1:14; Mormon 6:9). Some critics have claimed that swords were unknown in pre-Columbian times, or that the ancient sword-like weapons shouldn’t really be identified as true “swords.”<sup>26</sup>

**Response:** The Mesoamerican sword—known to the Aztecs as the *macuahuitl* (see figure 16) and labeled by the Maya as the



**Figure 16.** Aztec warriors led by an eagle knight, each holding a macuahuitl. (Wikimedia Commons, s.v. “Florentine Codex IX Aztec Warrior,” [commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2923185](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2923185).)



*hadzab* —was described by many Spanish witnesses who encountered its deadly effectiveness. This was a flat piece of hardwood with edges on both sides into which sharp pieces of obsidian were set. Representations of this weapon sometimes portray the blades with staggered placement along both sides of the wood, and in other representations closely fit together. In such cases “there can be no doubt that the intention . . . was to make a *continuous blade* (or edge), and not a *row of teeth*.”<sup>27</sup> Such swords could inflict serious wounds and could dismember or even decapitate an opponent.<sup>28</sup> Spaniards who fought against the Aztec and the Maya frequently called it a “sword” and modern scholars also regularly label this weapon as such.<sup>29</sup> Sharp wood-bladed swords were also used by some South American Andean peoples<sup>30</sup> and were also known to some cultures of the North American southwest<sup>31</sup> and the southeastern Woodland.<sup>32</sup>

## 6. Swords (in Book of Mormon Times)

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics’ Claim:** Some commentators have more specifically claimed that there is no evidence for pre-Columbian swords during the period covered by the Book of Mormon.<sup>33</sup>

**Response:** Although some scholars believed that Mesoamerican swords were not used until just a few centuries before the Spanish arrival, Olmec and Maya art not discovered until the twentieth century shows that this weapon was known much earlier, dating back as early as 1200 BC.<sup>34</sup>

## 7. Steel Swords (OW)

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics’ Claim:** The Book of Mormon states that Laban, a military leader living in Jerusalem around 600 BC, had a sword with a blade made of “precious steel” (1 Nephi 4:9). Critics have claimed there were no steel swords in the ancient Near East until centuries after Lehi would have left Jerusalem. According to one commentator, “This is the earliest account of steel to be found in history.”<sup>35</sup> Another states, “Laban’s sword was steel, when it is a notorious fact that the Israelites knew nothing of steel for hundreds of years afterwards.”<sup>36</sup> Even as late as the 1960s, an author boldly declares, “No one believes that steel was available to Laban or anyone else in 592 B.C.”<sup>37</sup>



**Response:** Archaeologists have recovered steel swords from several sites in the land of Israel dating to the Pre-exilic period. These include a meter-long sword from Vered Jericho from the time of King Josiah, shown in figure 17. “Metallurgic analysis of a sample taken from the blade proves that it was made of ‘mild steel,’ and that the iron was deliberately hardened into steel, attesting to the technical knowledge of the blacksmith.”<sup>38</sup> Other examples have subsequently been found.<sup>39</sup>

## 8. Steel Swords (NW)

**Status:** **Unconfirmed**

**Critics’ Claim:** Steel swords are mentioned among the Jaredites (Ether 7:9), and may possibly have been had among the Nephites (2 Nephi 5:14).<sup>40</sup> Many commentators have claimed that steel swords were unknown in pre-Columbian times.<sup>41</sup>

**Response:** There is currently no evidence for steel swords in the Americas during pre-Columbian times.<sup>42</sup>

## 9. Scimitars (OW)

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics’ Claim:** The “cimeter” (or scimitar) was used by the Nephites and Lamanites as a weapon of war (Enos 1:20; Mosiah 9:16; 10:8; Alma 2:12; 27:29; 43:18, 20, 37; 44:8; 60:2; Helaman 1:14). Some have claimed that scimitars would have been unknown to the Nephites and Lamanites because this weapon was not invented until centuries after Lehi and his family left Jerusalem. “The cimeter, a Turkish weapon, [was] not known until after the time of Mohommed.”<sup>43</sup> “The use of the word ‘scimitar’ does not occur in other literature before the rise of the Mohammedan power and apparently that peculiar weapon was not developed until long after the Christian era. It does not, therefore appear likely that the Nephites or the Lamanites possessed either the weapon or the term.”<sup>44</sup>



**Figure 17.** Israelite sword, found at Vered Jericho, dating to the seventh-sixth century BC. (Photo by Lauren Perry, used with permission.)

**Response:** Cimicers (or scimitars), were swords with a curved blade (see figure 18). According to one Old Testament scholar, it is likely that the “typical early Israelite sword was a sickle sword, which had a handle attached to a straight shaft that continued into a curved blade. The instrument was shaped somewhat like a harvesting sickle — thus the name — except that the sword was sharpened on the outside of the blade rather than the inside.”<sup>45</sup> According to Charlie Trimm, “The most common sword in Egypt was the sickle-sword (*Khopesh* sword), which looked like a harvesting sickle (somewhat like a scimitar) and was used during the Middle and New Kingdom. However, the outer edge rather than the inner edge was sharpened for slashing their enemy. They tended to be rather short.”<sup>46</sup>

Scholars routinely refer to this weapon as a “scimitar” in commentary and translations.<sup>47</sup> Similar weapons were known and used by the Hittites and armies of Mesopotamia.<sup>48</sup> An Egyptian cylinder seal discovered in 1925 at Beth Shean portrays a Canaanite god presenting a “scimitar sword” to Ramesses II.<sup>49</sup>

Some biblical scholars hold that the Hebrew term *kidon* found in the Hebrew Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls actually refers to a scimitar.<sup>50</sup> This has led some to translate David’s words to Goliath as: “You come against me with a sword [*hereb*] and spear [*hanit*] and scimitar [*kidon*], but I come against you with the name of Yahweh Sabaoth, god of the ranks of Israel” (1 Samuel 17:45).<sup>51</sup> Trimm also notes “a set of six swords taken as plunder in Sennacherib’s relief of his conquest of Lachish are slightly curved (more like a scimitar than the sickle sword) while another set of swords taken as plunder are straight.”<sup>52</sup> The evidence



**Figure 18.** Khopesh sword dedicated to Ramesses II. (Louvre Museum, *Wikimedia Commons*, s.v. “Khopesh sword dedicated to Ramesses II-E 25689,” commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Khopesh\_sword\_dedicated\_to\_Ramesses\_II-E\_25689-IMG\_2660.JPG.)

suggests that several kinds of curved swords, which scholars have characterized as scimitars, were known in the ancient Near East and ancient Israel in Pre-exilic times and would have been part of the cultural heritage of Lehi and his family.<sup>53</sup>

## 10. Scimitars (NW)

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** Some critics have claimed that there were no “cimeters” (or scimitars) in pre-Columbian times in the Americas (see Enos 1:20; Alma 2:12; Helaman 1:14).<sup>54</sup>

**Response:** Curved knives and swords, which would reasonably qualify as “cimeters” (scimitars), are shown in pre-Columbian art.<sup>55</sup> A Mayan monument dating to AD 613 from Tonina, Mexico portrays a warrior posing with a curved “scimitar-like flint blade.”<sup>56</sup> Ross Hassig, a specialist on Mesoamerican warfare, has discussed a Toltec weapon portrayed on Mayan monuments and codices, which he calls a “short sword.” It was a curved weapon inset with sharp obsidian blades along the edge that could be characterized as a scimitar.<sup>57</sup> A similar weapon appears to be portrayed on Olmec monuments at San Lorenzo (1200 BC).<sup>58</sup>

## 11. Daggers

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** The prophet Jacob mentions “daggers” in the Book of Mormon (Jacob 2:9). Some have claimed that daggers were unknown in pre-Columbian times.<sup>59</sup>

**Response:** Daggers of various kinds are well attested in pre-Columbian times and they are often portrayed in Mesoamerican art.<sup>60</sup>

## 12. Battle Axes

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** Some critics have claimed that battle axes (Enos 1:20; Mormon 6:9) were unknown in pre-Columbian times.<sup>61</sup>

**Response:** Evidence from archaeology and pre-Columbian art attests to the existence of the battle ax as an important weapon among the Classic Maya (figure 19).<sup>62</sup> According to Francis Robicsek,

The battle axes of the Classic Maya were of two main



**Figure 19.** Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, wielding an axe (tepoztlī), in a scene from plate 19 of the pre-Hispanic Borgia Codex. (Mario E. Fuente Cid, *Wikimedia Commons*, s.v. “Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli Codex Borgia,” [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli\\_Codex\\_Borgia.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli_Codex_Borgia.svg).)

varieties, those made of a single piece of stone, usually flint, and wooden hafted axes spiked with either a single heavy head or with two or three separate blades of obsidian. Besides being a regular attribute of the armor of the common warrior, axes were also often depicted as ceremonial implements of the priest-sacrificer and were probably used in ritual decapitations. . . . Axes which may have been used either in battle, sacrifice, or simply as insignia of office, are frequently shown on painted vases of northern Peten and the Usumacinta Valley.<sup>63</sup>

Robicsek further notes that “most of these axes seem to be composite weapons, some of them highly decorated with separate wooden handles and blades of flint or obsidian as inserts. Very rare, unique findings are the full size battle axes, flaked of a single piece of stone, which represent the height of ancient Maya weaponry.”<sup>64</sup>

### 13. Javelins

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics’ Claim:** Some critics claim that javelins (Jaron 1:8; Alma 51:34; 62:36) were unknown in pre-Columbian times.<sup>65</sup>

**Response:** Mesoamerican javelins of various kinds were known throughout Mesoamerican history.<sup>66</sup> Among the Aztecs “the javelin sometimes had two or three branches with points, so as to strike

several wounds at once.”<sup>67</sup> Javelins are also shown on Classic Maya vase paintings.<sup>68</sup>

## 14. Spears

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics’ Claim:** Some critics have claimed that spears (Alma 17:7) were unknown in pre-Columbian times.<sup>69</sup>

**Response:** Pre-Columbian peoples had spears (see figure 20).<sup>70</sup>

## 15. Bow and Arrow (in Book of Mormon Times)

**Status:** **Partially Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics’ Claim:** The “bow” (Enos 1:20; Mosiah 9:16; 10:8; Alma 2:12; 3:5; 17:7; 43:20; 44:8; 49:2, 4, 19, 22, 24; 50:4; Helaman 1:14; 16:2, 6; Mormon 6:9) and “arrow” (Jarom 1:8; Mormon 6:9) were a significant component of the armament of the Nephites and Lamanites. Some have claimed that the bow and arrow were unknown in ancient America during the time in which the Book of Mormon took place.<sup>71</sup>

**Response:** Archaeological evidence suggests that the bow and arrow were known much earlier in Mesoamerica than was once thought.<sup>72</sup> According to archaeologist Kazuo Aoyama, “notched and un-notched prismatic blade points made from Pachuca green obsidian were present in the Valley of Oaxaca beginning in the Middle Formative period.”<sup>73</sup> He found evidence of arrow points at the site of Aguateca during the Late Classic Maya period. Aguateca was destroyed in AD 810. He also discovered additional evidence for the weapon even earlier, during the Early Classic (AD 400–600) at Copan.<sup>74</sup> This evidence led him to conclude that “the bow and arrow could have existed in the Maya Lowlands earlier than has been previously suggested.”<sup>75</sup>

## 16. Quivers

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics’ Claim:** Some critics claimed that “quivers” (Jarom 1:8) were unknown in ancient America.<sup>76</sup>

**Response:** Quivers were known and used in pre-Columbian warfare. In fact, “Maya warriors were reported to carry two quivers” in some historical sources.<sup>77</sup>





## 17. Bow of Fine Steel (OW)

**Status:** **Partially Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** Many critics have claimed that Nephi's reference to a bow of "fine steel" (1 Nephi 16:18) is out of the place in the ancient world.<sup>78</sup>

**Response:** There is no evidence for the existence of bows made *entirely* of steel in the ancient Near East, but on several occasions the King James translation mentions a "bow of steel" without qualification (2 Samuel 22:35; Psalms 18:34; Job 20:24). The word translated as "steel" in these passages is the Hebrew *nhwsh*, which actually means "bronze" (as it is rendered in more modern translations). Moreover, the bronze bow in these passages does not refer to a weapon made completely of metal, but rather to a composite bow decorated with metal or reinforced at the nock and grip of the weapon with bronze.<sup>79</sup> In the older English of the King James translation, "steel" had a broader range of meaning than it does today and could refer not only to carburized iron, but also to bronze, which is a hardened or "steemed" alloy of copper and tin.<sup>80</sup>

Thus, if the Book of Mormon followed KJV idiom in its discussion of Nephi's "steel bow," then the status of this item would actually be confirmed. Yet because of uncertainty regarding the meaning of "of" (whether the text means "partially of" or "completely of" steel) and also the ambiguity regarding the meaning of "steel" (whether it refers to "modern steel" or to another hardened-metal alloy like "bronze"), this item has been designated as only partially confirmed.

## 18. Fiery Darts (OW & NW)

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** Nephi makes reference to the "fiery darts of the adversary" (1 Nephi 15:24). Some have claimed that such a reference would have been out of place in pre-Columbian times.<sup>81</sup>

**Response:** Nephi's reference to fiery projectiles appears in a sermon that took place during Nephi's journey in the wilderness in the Old World. Thus, technically speaking, the text doesn't necessitate the existence of fiery darts in a New World setting. The distinction is irrelevant, however, because fiery projectiles were used anciently in both Near Eastern and Mesoamerican warfare.<sup>82</sup>



## 19. Slings

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** Nephites and Lamanites made use of slings during their battles (Mosiah 9:16; 10:8; Alma 2:12; 3:5; Alma 17:7, 36, 38; 18:16; 43:20; 49:20). Some have claimed that slings were not used in pre-Columbian warfare.<sup>83</sup>

**Response:** Slings were used in both Mesoamerica and South America. In Mesoamerica the sling was used as a weapon at least as early as Olmec times, and the Maya had a word for sling by at least 1000 BC.<sup>84</sup>

## 20. Shields

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** Warriors in the Book of Mormon had many kinds of shields (Alma 43:19, 21; 44:9; 46:13; 49:6, 24; 3 Nephi 3:26; Ether 15:15, 24). Some have claimed that such references are anachronistic.<sup>85</sup>

**Response:** A variety of shields are attested in Mesoamerican art (figure 21) and known from later historical sources (figure 22).<sup>86</sup> Shields were also used by pre-Columbian peoples of South America<sup>87</sup> and North American southwest.<sup>88</sup>

## 21. Arm Shields

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** The Nephites had arm shields to protect themselves in battle (Alma 43:19, 38). Later, they are said to have had bucklers which are also a form of arm shield (3 Nephi 3:26). Some have claimed that pre-Columbian peoples never had arm shields.<sup>89</sup>

**Response:** Arm Shields are described in Spanish accounts of battles with the Maya and the Aztecs and are shown in pre-Columbian art.<sup>90</sup>

## 22. Headplates

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** The Nephites and Jaredites had headplates or helmets (Alma 43:38, 44; 46:13; 49:24; Helaman 1:14; 3 Nephi 4:7; Ether 15:15), but such were allegedly unknown in pre-Columbian times, according to some critics.<sup>91</sup>



**Figure 21.** Warrior figure with shield, classic Maya, Jaina style. (The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James C. Gruener, 1990.178, [clevelandart.org/art/1990.178](http://clevelandart.org/art/1990.178).)

**Response:** Just as a breastplate is designed to shield the chest, a headplate is essentially armor.<sup>92</sup> They are never said to have been made of metal in the Book of Mormon, so headplates of any material would suffice. Battle accounts in the Nephite record show that this piece of headgear could be broken into pieces by a fierce and determined opponent (Alma 43:44).

Various kinds of headgear are portrayed in Mesoamerican art dating from the Postclassic back to Preclassic times.<sup>93</sup> Some warriors wore



**Figure 22.** Aztec figure with two feathered shields. (Wolfgang Sauber, National Museum of Anthropology, Teotihuacán, *Wikimedia Commons*, s.v. “Teotihuacán - Figur mit Federschilden,” [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Teotihuac%C3%A1n\\_-\\_Figur\\_mit\\_Federschilden.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Teotihuac%C3%A1n_-_Figur_mit_Federschilden.jpg).)

quilted woolen caps while others (elite warriors) wore helmets made from pieces of wood or bone.<sup>94</sup> Helmets could also be ornamented with feathers, precious metal, gems, and other regalia, depending on the status of the individual. While more ostentatious forms shown in pre-Columbian art were likely used for ceremonial purposes, the helmet was “not primarily decorative but was a functional, protective piece of the combat uniform.”<sup>95</sup> It was “proof against sling-stones and offered some protection against atlatl darts and shock weapons.”<sup>96</sup>

### 23. Breastplates

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics’ Claim:** The Book of Mormon says warriors had breastplates (Alma 43:19, 21, 38, 44; 44:9; 46:13; 49:6, 24; Helaman 1:14; Ether 15:15).

Some critics have claimed that breastplates were unknown in pre-Columbian times.<sup>97</sup>

**Response:** Breastplates were an important component of Nephites and Jaredite warfare, although they were not universally used. While they afforded some protection, they could be pierced by a fierce and determined attack (Alma 43:44). Various kinds of breastplates were known and used in pre-Columbian warfare in Mesoamerica.<sup>98</sup>

## 24. Breastplates (of Copper and Brass)

**Status:** **Partially Confirmed** (1845–1965)

**Critics' Claim:** When they encountered the ruins of the Jaredites, the people of King Limhi found “breastplates, which are large, and they are of brass and of copper, and are perfectly sound.” (Mosiah 8:10). Some claim that metallic breastplates of copper and/or brass were unknown in pre-Columbian times.<sup>99</sup>

**Response:** These metal breastplates may have been uncommon and possibly elite objects, but it is not clear from the account whether they were ornamental or functional. Their undamaged condition and their discovery in association with the gold plates of Ether suggests they may not have been used in battle. The fact that the search party brought them back as a testimony to the king of what they had seen indicates that metal breastplates were unusual.

According to one Spanish chronicler, some Inca warriors wore decorative defensive gear and “would usually wear the most attractive and rich adornments and jewels; this included wearing fine plumes of many colors on their heads and large gold and silver plates on their chests and backs; however, the plates worn by poorer soldiers were copper.”<sup>100</sup>

The Spanish conquistadors described decorative armor, which included a breastplate that was ornamented with precious metal. According to Juan Diaz, an “Indian dressed him [their leader, Juan de Grijalva] with a breastplate and bracelets of gold, lace-shoes ornamented in gold, and on his head he placed a gold crown which was of very delicate leaves of gold.”<sup>101</sup> Another source reports that “they began by giving him gilded shoes; afterwards leggings, and cuirasses [i.e. breastplates], and all the parts of the iron and steel armor a cuirassier ordinarily wears when going into battle, only these were made of gold, beautifully worked; this done the cacique paid homage to Grijalva.”<sup>102</sup>

These items may have been made of wood that was then covered with gold.

Some of the armor in use among the Tabascans must have been exceedingly rich, judging by that which was presented to Juan de Grijalva by the cacique of that province. It consisted of greaves for the knees and legs made of wood and covered with sheets of gold, head pieces covered with gold plates and precious stones, among which was a visor, of which the upper half was of jewels linked together, and the lower half of gold plates; then there were cuirasses of solid gold, besides a quantity of armor-plates sufficient to cover the whole body.<sup>103</sup>

Daniel Brinton observes,

Nowhere else do we find such complete defensive armor. It consisted of helmet, body pieces, and greaves for the legs and arms, all of wood, covered neatly with copper or gold plates, so well done that the pieces looked as if they were of solid metal.<sup>104</sup>

## 25. Armies

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** Some critics have claimed that actual armies (Mormon 6:7) were unknown in pre-Columbian times.<sup>105</sup>

**Response:** Armies were ubiquitous in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica.<sup>106</sup>

## 26. Large Armies

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** Some critics claim that, contrary to the Book of Mormon, large armies (Alma 2:27; Mormon 1:11; 2:9, 25; 6:11–15) in pre-Columbian times were unknown.<sup>107</sup>

**Response:** Critics have often exaggerated the size of armies mentioned in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon mentions armies numbering in the thousands (Alma 2:19; 3:26; 28:11; 56:28; 57:6; 58:8; 62:12–13) and tens of thousands (Alma 3:26; 28:2; 56:28; Mormon 1:11; 2:9, 25) and on one exceptional occasion an army of 23 groups of ten thousand units each, or 230,000 (Mormon 6:10–15).

Ether indicates that during a lengthy war of many years over two

million men, women, and children had been killed (Ether 15:2), but this seems to include civilians and not only combatants. While it is possible that these numbers, like those found in other ancient accounts of warfare, may be exaggerated, historical accounts of Mesoamerican warfare contain comparable numbers that are consistent with what is found in the Book of Mormon.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, recent discoveries made possible via LiDAR technology have demonstrated that the overall population in ancient Maya settlements was much larger than previously suspected.<sup>109</sup>

## 27. Large Battle Casualties

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** In addition to large armies, critics have claimed that the reported number of battle casualties in the Book of Mormon are unbelievably high.<sup>110</sup>

**Response:** The book of Mormon mentions battle deaths in the thousands (Alma 2:19; 28:11; 60:22) and on rare occasions in the tens of thousands (Alma 3:26; 28:2; Mormon 6:10–15). Mormon reports that after one exceptional battle over 230,000 Nephites combatants, including their families, were killed. This compares favorably with some evidence from Mesoamerica which report similar numbers.<sup>111</sup>

## 28. Millions of War Deaths

**Status:** **Partially Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** Some have claimed that the report of millions of war deaths (Mormon 6:10–15; Ether 15:2) in the Book of Mormon are impossible.<sup>112</sup>

**Response:** During a lengthy Jaredite war over a period of many years over, “two millions of mighty men, and also their wives and children” were slain (Ether 15:2). By way of comparison, during the An Lushan Rebellion in China, during the Tang Dynasty, it is estimated that over a period of just ten years between 13 and 36 million people may have died.<sup>113</sup> Mormon recorded that the Nephites at the battle of Cumorah had twenty-three units of ten thousand each (Mormon 6:10–15). Assuming that the victorious Lamanite armies had comparable numbers, the war deaths during this conflict would have also been substantial. Historical accounts describing pre-Columbian examples of war deaths in the millions are known.<sup>114</sup>



## 29. Fainting for Loss of Blood

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** Helaman recounts how some 200 of his young warriors “fainted because of the loss of blood” following battle (Alma 57:25; cf. Ether 14:30; 15:9, 29, 32). It has been claimed that this account is unlikely based upon scientific evidence.<sup>115</sup>

**Response:** Helaman and his men viewed the survival of these wounded warriors as miraculous. Gregory Smith, a medical doctor and researcher, has also documented examples of individuals who fainted after blood loss and thereafter recovered showing, contrary to what some have argued, that such recovery is also scientifically attested.<sup>116</sup>

## 30. Prearranged Battles

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** It has been claimed that Mormon's request of the Lamanite king to allow his people time to gather for battle at a prearranged time and location (Mormon 6:2–3) was absurd and would not make sense militarily.<sup>117</sup>

**Response:** The native historian Fernando Alva Ixtlilxochitl related that the Toltec people of Mexico on one occasion agreed to a set time for battle ten years in advance.<sup>118</sup> The timing of Mesoamerican battles was sometimes based on astronomical calculations and dates that were believed to hold religious or cosmic significance. “The Maya looked to the gods for the exact time to launch a war, and the gods expressed their will by the movements of the stars. . . . Priests, consulting their books, could predict the time of eclipses and their first nighttime appearance of planets such as Venus and Mercury; such astronomical events were taken to represent the divine mandate to begin a war.”<sup>119</sup>

## 31. Wars of Extermination

**Status:** **Partially Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** The Book of Mormon recounts how the Jaredites destroyed themselves as a people through endemic warfare (Ether 15:29). Centuries later, the Lamanites and the Nephites engaged in decades of warfare resulting in the extinction of the Nephites as a



nation (Mormon 6). Some critics have claimed that wars of extermination (Alma 45:11) never happened in pre-Columbian times.<sup>120</sup>

**Response:** There is growing evidence that Mesoamerican warfare has resulted in the destruction and even the extinction of different groups at various times, lending plausibility to descriptions of similar events in the Book of Mormon.<sup>121</sup> Simon Martin suggests that ancient Maya armies may have sometimes been large enough to enact complete annihilation. “This would certainly conform to comparative historical data worldwide, where engagements range from minor skirmishes to major campaigns, and objectives can vary from merely making a show of force and testing the strength of a rival, to efforts at their complete conquest or annihilation. There is no reason not to assume similar variation among the Maya.”<sup>122</sup>

Archaeological evidence for this kind of warfare may be found at some sites in the Maya Lowlands (although not yet on the scale cited in the Book of Mormon). Bruce Dahlin, discussing the abandonment of some Late Classic Maya sites, suggests that “these site abandonments were caused by military defeat in *wars of annihilation*. In addition to pillaging, such catastrophic abandonments almost certainly imply *massacres*, running off, or enslaving and forcibly removing entire urban populations, plus rendering the site itself physically (and probably spiritually) uninhabitable.” Buildings were likely burned and stormed as portrayed in the mural of Chichen Itza. “It is reasonable to ask why the victors would want to do such a thing. *Ethnic hatred*, enslavement, desperation in capturing and holding an enemy’s material resources (specifically cultivable land), or simply providing a terrifying object lesson to other potential enemies come immediately to mind.” He thinks that “Chunchucmil, by virtue of its rich environmental diversity and especially its strategic location, had a near-monopoly over regional trade which its defeat and *annihilation* was intended to break.”<sup>123</sup> Although they date centuries after the time of the Book of Mormon, Dahlin’s analysis of archaeological evidence at a series of abandoned Mayan sites in the northern Yucatan is interesting and may provide insight into Lamanite motivations in the destruction of the Nephites.<sup>124</sup>

## 32. Post-Decapitation Movement and Breathing

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics’ Claim:** Some critics of the Book of Mormon have claimed that

the account of the beheading of Shiz and his subsequent movements and apparent attempts to breath (Ether 15:30–31) is unlikely.<sup>125</sup>

**Response:** The account of Shiz’s death—though surprising to most readers—is actually consistent with a neurological phenomena known as decerebrate rigidity. This physiological reaction that was not documented scientifically until 1898—sixty-eight years after the Book of Mormon was published.<sup>126</sup>

### 33. Remains of Book of Mormon Battles

**Status:** **Unconfirmed**

**Critics’ Claim:** Some critics have claimed that if the kinds of battles recounted in the Book of Mormon actually took place, that scholars would have identified remains of such battles.<sup>127</sup>

**Response:** No such remains have been identified as being associated with the battles mentioned in the Book of Mormon. However, it is not clear how a reader would definitively identify such battle remains, even if one could determine where such conflicts took place. Nor is it clear what one could reasonably expect to survive from such battles. The challenge of identifying battle remains is not merely a challenge for archaeology relating to the Book of Mormon, but for the archaeology of warfare more generally. This includes the issue of human remains<sup>128</sup> as well as the recovery and identification of weapons and other archaeological evidence of pre-modern warfare.<sup>129</sup>

### 34. Trumpets

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics’ Claim:** Trumpets are mentioned in the Book of Mormon sometimes in connection with battle (Mosiah 26:25; Alma 29:1; Ether 14:28). Some critics have claimed that trumpets were unknown in pre-Columbian times.<sup>130</sup>

**Response:** Various kinds of horns and trumpets were known in pre-Columbian times. Some that were used for battles are shown in Mesoamerican art.<sup>131</sup>

### 35. Cords

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics’ Claim:** Nephite armies made use of cords for various

purposes (Alma 62:21, 23, 36). Some critics have claimed that cords were unknown in pre-Columbian times.<sup>132</sup>

**Response:** Fiber from maguey, agave, and rushes were used to make cords and ropes in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica.<sup>133</sup>

### 36. Ladders

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** The Nephites made strategic use of ladders (Alma 62:21, 23) in capturing cities. Some have claimed that ladders were unknown in pre-Columbian warfare.<sup>134</sup>

**Response:** Ladders were known and sometimes used in ancient American warfare.<sup>135</sup> Diego Duran stated that when besieging enemy cities the Aztecs prepared “many kinds of ladders . . . some of wood, some of rope” in order to scale the walls.<sup>136</sup> Battle scenes portrayed on the murals of the Temple of the Jaguars at Chichen Itza show “scaling ladders”<sup>137</sup> and ladders are also represented on Classic Maya art at Bilbao and Piedras Negras in Guatemala.<sup>138</sup>

### 37. Tents

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** Jaredite, Nephite, and Lamanite armies had tents (Alma 2:20, 26; 51:34; 52:1; Ether 9:3). Some critics have claimed that references to tents in the Book of Mormon are anachronistic in ancient America.<sup>139</sup>

**Response:** Several kinds of tents were known and used by Mesoamerican armies.<sup>140</sup> According to the Spanish historian Fuentes y Guzman, the Quiche Maya of highland Guatemala during their pre-Columbian wars with other Maya groups had “tiendas de algodón” or cotton tents for their officers.<sup>141</sup>

### 38. Rations

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** It has been claimed that references to rations in the Book of Mormon (Alma 55:1) are out of place in an ancient American context.<sup>142</sup>

**Response:** Rations were an essential element in organized

Mesoamerican warfare. Ross Hassig discusses various kinds of foods that were used for rations in Aztec armies.<sup>143</sup>

### 39. Bands of Raiders and Plunderers

**Status:** **Confirmed** (1966–2024)

**Critics' Claim:** It has been claimed that the idea of raiders and plunderers (Helaman 11:27–31) in pre-Columbian times is out of place.<sup>144</sup>

**Response:** Raiding and plundering was a common practice in Mesoamerican warfare in pre-Columbian times. Hassig mentions “guerilla style fighting during periods of political upheaval which set-piece conventional armies were poorly suited to counter.”<sup>145</sup>

### Summary of Results

During the first fourteen years following the publication of the Book of Mormon (1830–1844), seventeen problematic items relating to ancient warfare and the Book of Mormon were noted by critics, none of which could be confirmed (figure 23). During the second period (1845–1965), that number had risen to twenty-seven (figure 24). From 1966 to 2024, however, while the number of items rose to thirty-nine, by 2024 thirty-two had been confirmed, five partially confirmed, and two remained unconfirmed (figure 25).



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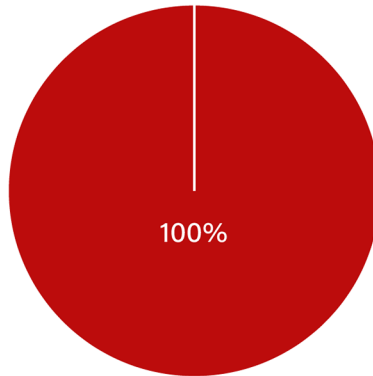
## Book of Mormon Weapons & Warfare (1830–1844)

**Total Items: 17**

0 Confirmed ■

0 Partially Confirmed ■

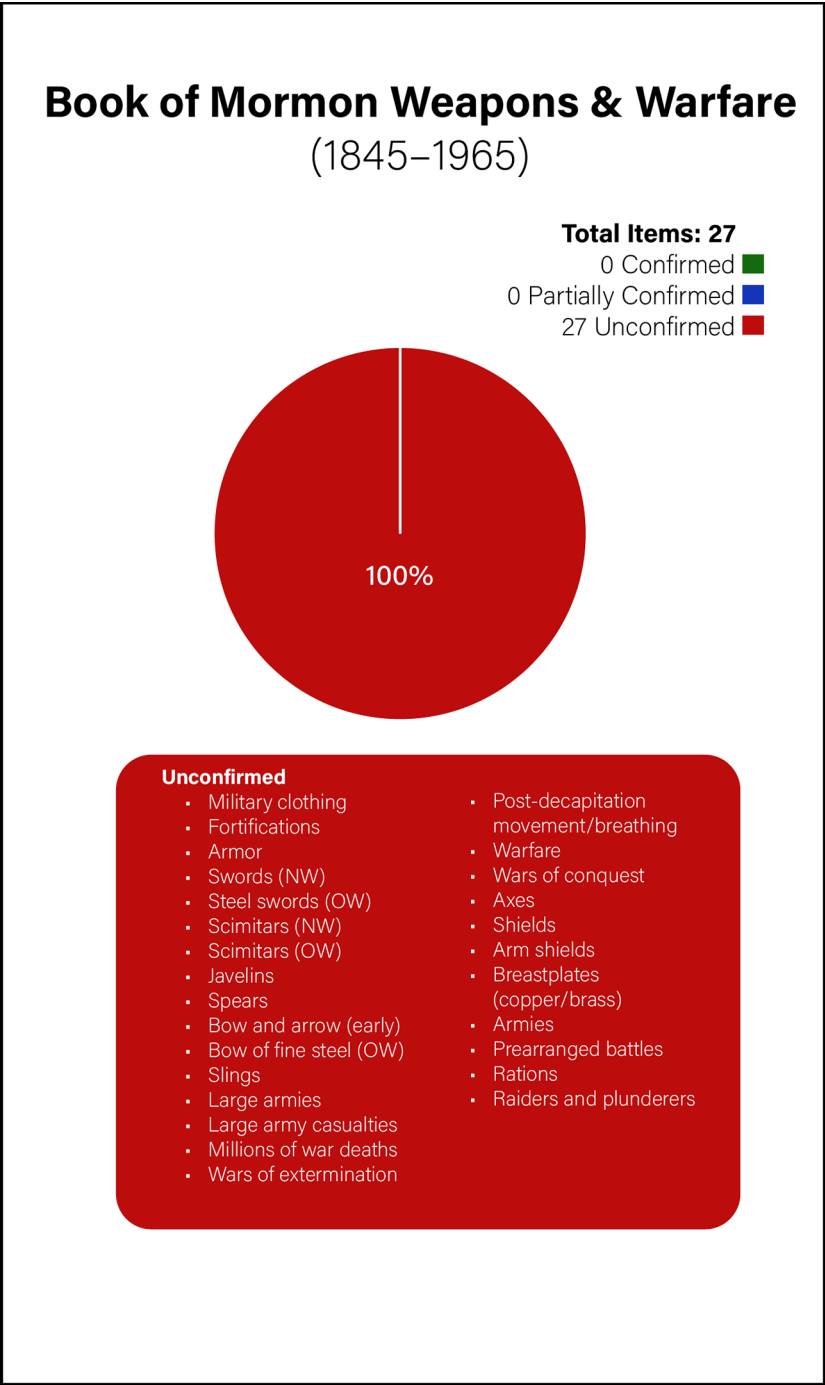
17 Unconfirmed ■



### Unconfirmed

- Military clothing
- Fortifications
- Armor
- Swords (NW)
- Steel swords (OW)
- Scimitars (NW)
- Javelins
- Spears
- Bow and arrow (early)
- Bow of fine steel (OW)
- Slings
- Large armies
- Large army casualties
- Millions of war deaths
- Wars of extermination
- Post-decapitation movement/breathing
- Rations

**Figure 23.** Anachronisms for warfare in the Book of Mormon (1830–1844).



**Figure 24.** Anachronisms for warfare in the Book of Mormon (1845–1965).

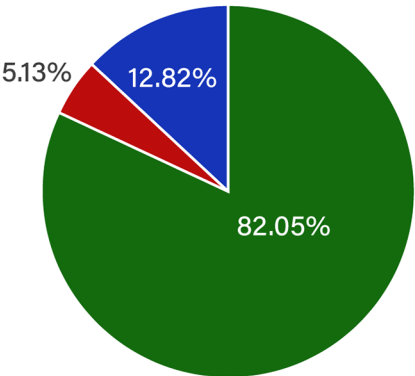
# Book of Mormon Weapons & Warfare (1966–2024)

**Total Items: 39**

32 Confirmed

5 Partially Confirmed

2 Unconfirmed



**Unconfirmed**

- Steel swords (NW)
- Battle remains (Book of Mormon)

**Partially Confirmed**

- Bow and arrow (early)
- Breastplates (copper/brass)
- Millions of war deaths
- Wars of extermination

**Confirmed**

- |                     |                         |  |
|---------------------|-------------------------|--|
| • Fortifications    | • Javelins              | • Fainting, loss of blood              |
| • Warfare (early)   | • Spears                | • Prearranged battles                  |
| • Wars of conquest  | • Quivers               | • Post-decapitation movement/breathing |
| • Armor             | • Fiery arrows          | • Trumpets                             |
| • Swords (NW)       | • Slings                | • Cords                                |
| • Swords (NW early) | • Shields               | • Ladders                              |
| • Steel swords (OW) | • Arm shields           | • Tents                                |
| • Scimitars (NW)    | • Headplates            | • Rations                              |
| • Scimitars (OW)    | • Breastplates          | • Raiders and plunderers               |
| • Daggers           | • Armies                |  |
| • Battle axes       | • Large armies          |  |
|                     | • Large army casualties |  |

**Figure 25.** Anachronisms for warfare in the Book of Mormon (1966–2024).



## Notes

1. E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, OH: printed by the author, 1834), 71.
2. Z—a, “Mormonism: Scene in a Stage Coach,” *Christian Watchman* (Boston), 5 May 1837.
3. J. M. Peck, *A Gazeteer of Illinois* [ . . . ] (Jacksonville, IL: R. Goudy, 1834), 53; Tyler Parsons, *Mormon Fanaticism Exposed* [ . . . ] (Boston: printed by the author, 1841), 26; William Sheldon, *Mormonism Examined* [ . . . ] (Brodhead, WI: printed by the author, 1876), 118–19; W. G. Marshall, *Through America: or, Nine Months in the United States* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1881), 156.
4. Some readers have assumed that many or most of the weapons mentioned by the Nephite writers were metallic, a claim that is not directly supported by the text. See, for example, Gordon H. Fraser, *What Does the Book of Mormon Teach?* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 60–61; Gordon H. Fraser, *Is Mormonism Christian?* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), 142. A more careful reading suggests that metal may have been associated with only a few of the weapons mentioned, which can be plausibly understood to have been unusual or rare elite items. See 2 Nephi 5:14; Mosiah 8:10–11; Ether 7:9. Most other weapons were likely made of other materials.
5. Fraser, *What Does the Book of Mormon Teach?*, 60, 63; Gordon H. Fraser, *Joseph and the Golden Plates: A Close Look at the Book of Mormon* (Eugene, OR: Industrial Litho, 1978), 58, 60; Latayne Colvette Scott, *The Mormon Mirage: A Former Mormon Tells Why She Left the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979), 83; Rick Branch, “Fortification,” *Utah Evangel* 30, no. 7 (1983): 3; Peter Bartley, *Mormonism: The Prophet, the Book and the Cult* (Dublin: Veritas, 1989), 53.
6. Sylvanus Griswold Morley, *The Ancient Maya*, 2nd ed. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1947), 262; Julian H. Steward, “Cultural Causality and Law: A Trial Formulation of the Development of Early Civilizations,” *American Anthropologist* 51, no. 1 (1949): 20; Charles Gallenkamp, *Maya: The Riddle and Rediscovery of a Lost Civilization* (New York: David McKay, 1959), 95; J. Eric S. Thompson, *The Rise and Fall of Maya Civilization*, 2nd ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 98.
7. Peck, *Gazeteer of Illinois*, 53: “Their ceremonial centres had no fortification, and were for the most part located in places incapable of defence.” Bartley, *Mormonism*, 53.
8. Justin Bracken, “Preclassic Maya Fortification at Murallade Leon, Peten: Deducing Assets, Military Strategies, and Specific Threats through Analysis of Defensive Systems,” *Ancient Mesoamerica* 34, no. 1 (2023): 216–40; Marcello A. Canuto et al., “Ancient Lowland Maya Complexity as Revealed by Airborne Laser Scanning of Northern Guatemala,” *Science* 361, no. 6409 (28 September 2018): 1–17; David Webster, “The Not So Peaceful Civilization: A Review of Maya War,” *Journal of World Prehistory* 14, no. 1 (2000): 84; Dennis E. Puleston and Donald W. Callender Jr., “Defensive Earthworks at Tikal,” *Expedition* 9, no. 3

- (1967): 40–48; David L. Webster, *Defensive Earthworks at Becan, Campeche, Mexico: Implications for Warfare* (New Orleans: Tulane University Middle American Research Institute, 1976). This report was based upon Webster's 1972 doctoral dissertation.
9. Scripture Central Staff, "Fortifications," Evidence 175, 30 March 2021, [scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-fortifications](http://scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-fortifications); Scripture Central Staff, "4 Ways the New Maya Discoveries May Relate to the Book of Mormon," Scripture Central blog, 5 February 2018, [scripturecentral.org/blog/4-ways-the-new-maya-discoveries-may-relate-to-the-book-of-mormon](http://scripturecentral.org/blog/4-ways-the-new-maya-discoveries-may-relate-to-the-book-of-mormon); "Ancient American Warfare," Book of Mormon Resources (blog), 1 August 2020, [bookofmormonresources.blogspot.com/2020/08/ancient-american-warfare.html](http://bookofmormonresources.blogspot.com/2020/08/ancient-american-warfare.html); Scripture Central Staff, "Watch Towers," Evidence 38, 19 September 2020, [scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-watch-towers](http://scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-watch-towers); John L. Sorenson, *Mormon's Codex: An Ancient American Book* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2013), 90, 98, 405–10, 673–74; John Sorenson, "Fortifications in the Book of Mormon Account Compared with Mesoamerican Fortifications," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 425–44.
  10. Fraser, *What Does the Book of Mormon Teach?*, 60; Fraser, *Joseph and the Golden Plates*, 58.
  11. Fraser, *What Does the Book of Mormon Teach?*, 63; Fraser, *Joseph and the Golden Plates*, 60.
  12. Scott, *Mormon Mirage*, 83.
  13. Branch, "Fortification," 3.
  14. Bartley, *Mormonism*, 53.
  15. See Scripture Central Staff, "Views of Warfare," Evidence 209, 28 June 2021, [scripturecentral.org/evidence/views-of-warfare](http://scripturecentral.org/evidence/views-of-warfare).
  16. David Webster, "Mesoamerica: The Not So Peaceful Civilization?," *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 15, no. 1 (2005): 127–28.
  17. Webster, "Review of Maya War," 68.
  18. Webster, "Review of Maya War," 112.
  19. Ross Hassig, *War and Society in Ancient Mesoamerica* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). See also relevant essays in M. Kathryn Brown and Travis W. Stanton, eds., *Ancient Mesoamerican Warfare* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 2003); Axel E. Nielson and William H. Walker, eds., *Warfare in Cultural Context: Practice, Agency, and the Archaeology of Violence* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009); Andrew K. Scherer and John W. Verano, eds., *Embattled Bodies, Embattled Places: War in Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica and the Andes* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2014); Shawn G. Morton and Meaghan M. Peuramaki-Brown, eds., *Seeking Conflict in Mesoamerica: Operational, Cognitive, and Experiential Approaches* (Louisville: University Press of Colorado, 2019). See also Dirk Van Tuerenhout, "Maya Warfare: Sources and Interpretations," *Revue*

- internationale d'anthropologie et de sciences humaines* 50 (2002): 129–52; Simon Martin, *Ancient Maya Politics: A Political Anthropology of the Classic Period 150–900 CE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 196–236; Omar Andres Alcover Firpi and Charles Golden, “The Politics of Conflict: War before and beyond the State in Maya Society,” in *The Maya World*, ed. Scott R. Hutson and Traci Ardren (Milton Park, UK: Routledge, 2020), 477–95; Akira Ichikawa, “Warfare in Prehispanic El Salvador,” *Annual Papers of the Anthropological Institute* 12 (2021): 178–96; Christopher Hernandez and Justin Bracken, “Unleashing Maya Warfare: Inquiry into the Practical Aspects of War-Making,” *Ancient Mesoamerica* 34, no. 1 (2023): 185–97; Bracken, “Preclassic Maya Fortification at Muralla de Leon, Peten,” 216–40.
20. “Wars of conquest were unknown for the simple reason that the gaining of new territory for occupation was unknown. There was plenty of room for all.” Fraser, *What Does the Book of Mormon Teach?*, 63.
  21. See Jesper Nielsen, “Hearts and Torches: Possible Teotihuacan Military Entradas in North-Central and Western Mesoamerica,” in *Seeking Conflict in Mesoamerica*, 145–64; Martin, *Ancient Maya Politics*, 196–236; Scripture Central Staff, “Views of Warfare.”
  22. Martin, *Ancient Maya Politics*, 229.
  23. Arthur Budvarson, *The Book of Mormon Examined* (La Mesa, CA: Utah Christian Tract Society, 1959), 36; Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 1968), 161–63; John A. Price, “The Book of Mormon vs. Anthropological Prehistory,” *Indian Historian* 7, no. 3 (1974): 38; Walter Martin, *The Maze of Mormonism* (Santa Ana, CA: Vision House, 1978), 56–57; Scott, *Mormon Mirage*, 83–84; Philip Jackson, “More on the Nephites and the Book of Mormon,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 14, no. 16 (1988): 14–15. While some readers have assumed that all Jaredite, Nephite, and Lamanite armor was made of metal, the only armor said to have been made of metal was the Jaredite breastplates discovered by the people of King Limhi (Mosiah 8:10), and those appear to have been unusual.
  24. Hassig, *War and Society in Ancient Mesoamerica*, 252; Ross Hassig, *Aztec Warfare: Imperial Expansion and Political Control* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 85–90. For Inca armor, see Terence N. D’Altroy, *The Incas*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 411, 447; Scripture Central Staff, “Mesoamerican Armor,” Evidence 193, 18 May 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-mesoamerican-armor.
  25. Hassig, *Aztec Warfare*, 88.
  26. See Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 71. Brent Metcalfe claims that the work of those who consider the macuahuitl a sword lacks methodological rigor. Brent Lee Metcalfe, “Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26, no. 3 (1993): 161, [dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V26N03\\_163.pdf](http://dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V26N03_163.pdf). According to James White, the macuahuitl was not a sword but merely “a war club with sharp rocks embedded in it!” James White, “Of Cities and Swords,” *Christian Research Journal* 19, no. 1 (1996): 35.

27. AD. F. Bandelier, "On the Art of War and Mode of Warfare of the Ancient Mexicans," *Peabody Museum Annual Reports* 2 (1877): 108n52.
28. Hassig, *Aztec Warfare*, 83–85; Hassig, *War and Society in Ancient Mesoamerica*, 138.
29. Scripture Central Staff, "Pre-Columbian Swords," Evidence 195, 25 May 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-pre-columbian-swords; Matthew Roper, "Swords and Cimeters in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8, no. 1 (1999): 34–43, 77–78, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol8/iss1/77; Matthew Roper, "Eyewitness Descriptions of Mesoamerican Swords," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5, no. 1 (1996): 150–58, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1134&context=jbms; Matthew Roper, "On Cynics and Swords," *FARMS Review of Books* 9, no. 1 (1997): 151–52, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol9/iss1/16/; William J. Hamblin and A. Brent Merrill, "Swords in the Book of Mormon," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, 329–51.
30. "Another favorite [weapon of the Incas] was a hard, double-edged, palmwood club shaped like a sword." D'Altroy, *Incas*, 345. Archaeologists found swords made of hardwood among graves in a cave in the Titicaca basin dating to the Late Intermediate Period (AD 1000–1450). Elizabeth Arkush, "Warfare, Space, and Identity in the South-Central Andes," in *Warfare in Cultural Context*, 200.

The *macana* is a stick made of *chonta* palm wood about one *braza* long, four fingers wide, thin, and with two sharp edges; it ends in a rounded hilt and a pommel like a sword. It is held with both hands like a broadsword, and a blow with it is so effective that if a man gets hit on the head, it will crack his skull.

Bernabe Cobo, *Inca Religion and Customs*, trans. Roland Hamilton (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 218; Ann Kendall, *Everyday Life of the Incas* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1973), 104.
31. Steven A. LeBlanc, *Prehistoric Warfare in the American Southwest* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999), 97–98, 104–6; Ross Hassig, "Anasazi Violence: A View from Mesoamerica," in *Deciphering Anasazi Violence: With Regional Comparisons to Mesoamerican and Woodland Cultures*, ed. Peter Y. Bullock (Santa Fe: HRM Books, 1998), 61; David R. Wilcox and Jonathan Haas, "The Scream of the Butterfly: Competition and Conflict in the Prehistoric Southwest," *Themes in Southwest Prehistory*, ed. George J. Gumerman (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1994), 224; Earl H. Morris, "Burials in the Aztec Ruin: The Aztec Ruin Annex," *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 26, nos. 3–4 (1924): 194–95.
32. During the Middle Mississippian Period (AD 1100–1350), "handheld weapons such as war clubs proliferated into several forms by this time, ranging from sticks and staffs to swords and hatchets. . . . Flint knives, possibly used for scalping, are often found in elite burials. Long versions of these knives, 'swords,' are also found in elite graves." David H. Dye, "The Transformation of Mississippian Warfare: Four Case Studies from the Mid-South," *Archaeology of Warfare: Prehistories of Raiding and Conquest*, ed. Elizabeth N. Arkush and Mark W. Allen (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), 131. See also

- Wayne William Van Horne, "The Warclub: Weapon and Symbol in Southeastern Indian Societies" (PhD diss., University of Georgia, 1993), 60–106; Wayne W. Van Horne, "Warclubs and Falcon Warriors: Martial Arts, Status, and the Belief System in Southeastern Mississippian Chiefdoms" (paper, Annual Meeting of the Central States Anthropological Society, Beloit, WI, 20 March 1993).
33. Deanne G. Matheny, "Does the Shoe Fit? A Critique of the Limited Tehuantepec Geography," in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*, ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 293.
  34. Ann Cyphers, *Escultura Olmeca de San Lorenzo Tenochtitlan* (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2004), 145–46; Rubén Cabrera, "Conjunto Plaza Oeste," in *Teotihuacán, 2 vols.*, ed. Beatriz de la Fuente, *La pintura mural prehispánica en México 1* (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1995), 1:48. The objects on the murals are shown on pages 49–51. Alfonso A. Garduno Arzave, "De las armas ofensivas en el arte y la arqueología de Teotihuacán," *La pintura mural prehispánica en México* 12, nos. 24–25 (2006): 59; David Yiro Cisneros Garcia, "Tres pinturas murales in situ en la sección sur del Conjunto del Sol N3E1, Teotihuacan," *Fuimos peces*, 25 April 2019, fuimospeces.mx/single-post/2019/04/24/murales-teotihuaca; Scripture Central Staff, "Swords in Book of Mormon Times," Evidence 194, 25 May 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-swords-in-book-of-mormon-times-1; Matthew Roper, "Book of Mormon Swords in Mesoamerican Antiquity," *Insights: The Newsletter of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship* 28, no. 2 (2008): 2–3, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/insights/vol28/iss2/2/.
  35. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 25.
  36. E. L. Kelley and Clark Braden, *Public Discussion of the Issues between the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Church of Christ [ . . . ]* (St. Louis: Clark Braden, 1884), 109.
  37. William Whalen, *The Latter-day Saints in the Modern Day World* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), 48. "Laban is represented as killed by one Nephi, some six hundred years before Christ, with a sword 'of the most precious steel,' hundreds of years before steel was known to man!" Daniel H. C. Bartlett, *The Mormons or, Latter-Day Saints: Whence Came They?* (London: James Nisbet, 1911), 15. "[The Book of Mormon] speaks of the most 'precious steel,' before the commonest had been dreamt of." C. Sheridan Jones, *The Truth About the Mormons: Secrets of Salt Lake City* (London: William Rider & Son, 1920), 4–5. "Nephi . . . wielded a sword 'of the most precious steel.' But steel was not known to man in those days." Stuart Martin, *The Mystery of Mormonism* (London: Odhams Press, 1920), 44. "Laban had a steel sword long before steel came into use." George Bartholomew Arbaugh, *Revelation in Mormonism: Its Character and Changing Forms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932), 55. "Every commentator on the Book of Mormon has pointed out the many cultural and historical anachronisms, such as the steel sword of Laban in 600 B.C." Thomas O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago:

- University of Chicago Press, 1957), 39. See also Fraser, *What Does the Book of Mormon Teach?*, 60–61; “One Wonders,” *Inner Circle* 2, no. 8 (1985): 3.
38. Avraham Eitan, “Rare Sword of the Israelite Period Found at Jericho,” *Israel Museum Journal* 12 (1994): 62.
39. Amihai Mazar and Shmuel Ahituv, “Tel Rehov in the Assyrian Period: Squatters, Burials, and a Hebrew Seal,” in *The Fire Signals of Lachish: Studies in the Archaeology and History of Israel in the Late Bronze Age, Iron Age, and Persian Period in Honor of David Ussishkin*, ed. Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na’aman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 273; Herbert Maryon, “Early Near Eastern Steel Swords,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 65, no. 2 (1961): 173–84. See also Aren Maeir, “The ‘Judahite’ Swords from the ‘Lachish’ Reliefs of Sennacherib,” *Eretz Israel: Archaeological, Historical, and Geographical Studies* 25 (1996): 210–14.
40. The text doesn’t clarify whether the swords modeled after Laban’s sword (mentioned in 2 Nephi 5:14) were also made of steel (or even of any metal) or the resemblance pertained to other features. Even if these swords were made of metal, the record doesn’t indicate how many were made or how prevalent they were throughout Nephite history.
41. Fraser, *What Does the Book of Mormon Teach?*, 90.
42. The text indicates that some Jaredites had steel swords, and the people of King Limhi found swords with rusted blades on the Jaredite battlefield and brought them back to the land of Lehi-Nephi (Ether 7:9; Mosiah 8:11). These rusted blades may have been steel, bronze, or even worked iron. Such swords would likely have been elite, uncommon items.
43. Samuel Hawthornthwaite, *Adventures among the Mormons* [ . . . ] (Manchester, UK: printed by the author, 1857), 69; John Hyde Jr., *Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs* (New York: W. P. Fetridge, 1857), 235.
44. Brigham D. Madsen, ed., *B. H. Roberts: Studies of the Book of Mormon*, ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 36. “Cimeters were curved swords used by the Persians, Arabs, and Turks, half a world away from America and appearing a thousand years too late to enter the picture.” Fraser, *Joseph and the Golden Plates*, 58. See also James Spencer, *The Disappointment of B.H. Roberts* (Boise: Through the Maze, 1991), 4; Earl Wunderli, *An Imperfect Book: What the Book of Mormon Tells Us about Itself* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2013), 36; John Christopher Thomas, *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon: A Literary and Theological Introduction* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2016), 420.
45. Boyd Seevers, *Warfare in the Old Testament: The Organization, Weapons, and Tactics of Ancient Near Eastern Armies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2013), 58; see also p. 121, fig. 4.2.
46. Charlie Trimm, *Fighting for the King and the Gods: A Survey of Warfare in the Ancient Near East* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 516, figs. 7.3 and 7.4.
47. See, for example, Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000–586 BC* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 265; Donald B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan,*



- and *Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 79.
48. Trimm, *Fighting for the King and the Gods*, 519, 524, figs. 7.3, 7.4, 7.5.
  49. Daphna Ben-Tor, "The God Presenting the Scimitar-Sword on the Cylinder Seal from Beth Shean: Baal-Seth or Resheph?," in *In the House of Heqanakht: Text and Context in Ancient Egypt. Studies in Honor of James P. Allen*, ed. M. Victoria Almansa-Villatoro, Silvia Stubnova Nigrelli, and Mark Lehner (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 18–28.
  50. G. Molin, "What Is a Kidon?," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 1, no. 4 (1956): 336; Jeffrey R. Zorn, "Reconsidering Goliath: An Iron Age I Philistine Chariot Warrior," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 360 (2010): 9–11.
  51. P. Kyle McCarter Jr., *1 Samuel* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 285.
  52. Trimm, *Fighting for the King and the Gods*, 528.
  53. Scripture Central Staff, "Why Does the Book of Mormon Mention Cimicers?," KnoWhy 472, 2 October 2018, scripturecentral.org/knowwhy/why-does-the-book-of-mormon-mention-cimicers; Matthew Roper, "Mesoamerican 'Cimeters' in Book of Mormon Times," *Insights: The Newsletter of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship* 28, no. 1 (2008): 2, scholars.archive.byu.edu/insights/vol28/iss1/3/; Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Scimitars, Cimeters! We have Scimitars! Do We Need Another Cimeter?," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, 352–59.
  54. Madsen, *B. H. Roberts: Studies of the Book of Mormon*, 36; Fraser, *What Does the Book of Mormon Teach?*, 60–61; Fraser, *Is Mormonism Christian?*, 142; Fraser, *Joseph and the Golden Plates*, 58. See also Spencer, *Disappointment of B. H. Roberts*, 4; Thomas Key, *The Book of Mormon in the Light of Science*, 15th ed. (Marlow, OK: Utah Missions, 1997), 69; Wunderli, *Imperfect Book*, 36; Thomas, *Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon*, 420.
  55. Scripture Central, "Why Does the Book of Mormon Mention Cimicers?"; Roper, "Mesoamerican 'Cimeters'," 2.
  56. Mary Miller and Simon Martin, *Courtly Art of the Ancient Maya* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 188, plate 106.
  57. Hassig, *War and Society in Ancient Mesoamerica*, 112–13. See also Roper, "Swords and Cimeters in the Book of Mormon," 41–43; Roper, "Mesoamerican 'Cimeters,'" 2; Scripture Central Staff, "Why Does the Book of Mormon Mention Cimicers?"
  58. Cyphers, *Escultura Olmeca de San Lorenzo Tenochtilan*, 145, referencing San Lorenzo Monuments 78 and 159.
  59. James R. White, *Letters to a Mormon Elder* (Port St. Lucie, FL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 1990), 168–69.
  60. Francis Robicsek, "The Weapons of the Ancient Maya," in *Circumpacifica Band I: Mittel und Sudamerika: Festschrift für Thomas S. Barthel*, ed. Bruno Illius and Matthew Laubscher (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1990), 372, figs. 3–5, 7; Hassig, *War and Society in Ancient Mesoamerica*, 47. On North American daggers, see LeBlanc, *Prehistoric Warfare in the American Southwest*, 98, 113–14.



61. Key, *Book of Mormon in the Light of Science*, 69.
62. Scripture Central Staff, "Axes," Evidence 170, 22 March 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-axes; Robicsek, "Weapons of the Ancient Maya," 372; Prudence M. Rice et al., "Defensive Architecture and the Context of Warfare at Zacpeten," in *The Kowoj: Identity, Migration, and Geopolitics in Late Postclassic Peten, Guatemala* (Denver: University Press of Colorado, 2009), 131–32.
63. Robicsek, "Weapons of the Ancient Maya," 372.
64. Robicsek, "Weapons of the Ancient Maya," 372.
65. Fraser, *What Does the Book of Mormon Teach?*, 59, 61; White, *Letters to a Mormon Elder*, 168–69.
66. See Scripture Central Staff, "Javelins," Evidence 180, 5 April 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-javelins; Bandelier, "Art of War and Mode of Warfare," 105; Rice et al., "Defensive Architecture," 131. On the use of the javelin in South America, see D'Altroy, *Incas*, 345.
67. Bandelier, "Art of War and Mode of Warfare," 105.
68. Robicsek, "Weapons of the Ancient Maya," 372.
69. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 71; Fraser, *What Does the Book of Mormon Teach?*, 59, 61.
70. Spears are frequently portrayed in Mayan art. Rice et al., "Defensive Architecture," 131. For spears in South America, see D'Altroy, *Incas*, 345.
71. Fraser, *What Does the Book of Mormon Teach?*, 62–63; Fraser, *Joseph and the Golden Plates*, 60; Scott, *Mormon Mirage*, 83; White, *Letters to a Mormon Elder*, 168–69.
72. Scripture Central Staff, "Bow and Arrow," Evidence 181, 12 April 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-bow-and-arrow.
73. Kazuo Aoyama, *Elite Craft Producers, Artists, and Warriors at Aguateca: Lithic Analysis* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2009), 121.
74. Kazuo Aoyama, "Classic Maya Warfare and Weapons: Spear, Dart, and Arrow Points of Aguateca and Copan," *Ancient Mesoamerica* 16 (2005): 291–304.
75. Aoyama, *Elite Craft Producers, Artists, and Warriors*, 121. The bow and arrow were also used by the Incas. D'Altroy, *Incas*, 345.
76. White, *Letters to a Mormon Elder*, 168.
77. Hassig, *War and Society in Ancient Mesoamerica*, 248nn6–7.
78. Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, 166; Mark D. Thomas, "Swords Cankered with Rust," *Sunstone* 15, no. 3 (1991): 62.
79. Frank Moore Cross Jr. and David Noel Freedman, "A Royal Song of Thanksgiving: II Samuel 22 = Psalm 18," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 72, no. 1 (1953): 31. According to Roland De Vaux, "the term refers to the metal coverings of certain bows." Roland De Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, trans. John McHugh (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 243. Peter Craigie states, "The expression 'bow of bronze' may either indicate a wooden bow with bronze

decoration, or the bronze tipped arrows shot from large bows, or it may merely be a poetic way of describing the great strength of the warrior's bow." Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50* (Waco, TX: Word Press, 1983), 176. William Hamblin, a Latter-day Saint historian and specialist in warfare in the ancient Near East, observes,

Composite bows have a specific structural problem that leaves them susceptible to changes in temperature and climate, which may cause the bow to warp and break. . . . Thus, if Nephi's bow were of the composite type, his move from the more temperate climate of Palestine to the dry heat of the Arabian peninsula could have contributed to the risk that his bow might warp and break.

William J. Hamblin, "The Bow and Arrow in the Book of Mormon," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, 374.

80. Scripture Central Staff, "Why Did Nephi's 'Fine Steel' Bow Break?," KnoWhy 548, 31 January 2020, [scripturecentral.org/knowwhy/why-did-nephis-fine-steel-bow-break](https://scripturecentral.org/knowwhy/why-did-nephis-fine-steel-bow-break).
81. Key, *Book of Mormon in the Light of Science*, 69.
82. See Scripture Central Staff, "Fiery Darts," Evidence 158, 1 March 2021, [scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-fiery-darts](https://scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-fiery-darts); Stephen O. Smoot, "The 'Fiery Darts of the Adversary' in 1 Nephi 15:24," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 5–9, [journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-fiery-darts-of-the-adversary-in-1-nephi-1524/](https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-fiery-darts-of-the-adversary-in-1-nephi-1524/); Hassig, *Aztec Warfare*, 79; Hassig, *War and Society in Ancient Mesoamerica*, 138. One native Mexican account describes a battle in which warriors "shot down some sort of smoking arrows." Richley H. Crapo and Bonnie Glass-Coffin, eds., *Anónimo Mexicano* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2005), 39–40.
83. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 71; Key, *Book of Mormon in the Light of Science*, 69.
84. See Scripture Central Staff, "Slings," Evidence 179, 5 April 2021, [scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-slings](https://scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-slings); Hassig, *War and Society in Ancient Mesoamerica*, 28–31, 205n51. The sling was also used by the Incas in South America. D'Altroy, *Incas*, 345.
85. Gordon Fraser erroneously faults the Book of Mormon for referencing metal shields, although the text does not specify the material the shields were made of. Fraser, *What Does the Book of Mormon Teach?*, 59, 61; Fraser, *Is Mormonism Christian?*, 142; White, *Letters to a Mormon Elder*, 168–69.
86. Monument C from Tres Zapotes, which dates to the Late Formative period, portrays warriors with large rectangular shields. Hassig, *War and Society in Ancient Mesoamerica*, 31; see pp. 95–96. See also Thelma D. Sullivan, "The Arms and Insignia of the Mexica," *Estudios de Cultura Nahuatl* 10 (1972): 156; Scripture Central Staff, "Shields," Evidence 191, 3 May 2021, [scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-shields](https://scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-shields).
87. D'Altroy, *Incas*, 347.

88. LeBlanc, *Prehistoric Warfare in the American Southwest*, 97–98, 106–12, 297–98.
89. Budvarson, *Book of Mormon Examined*, 36; White, *Letters to a Mormon Elder*, 168–69.
90. Scripture Central Staff, “Shields.”
91. Key, *Book of Mormon in the Light of Science*, 69.
92. Royal Skousen, *The Nature of the Original Language, part 3 of The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2018), 449–51.
93. Scripture Central Staff, “Headplates” Evidence 139, 19 January 2021, scripture-central.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-headplates; Prescott H. F. Follett, *War and Weapons of the Maya* (New Orleans: Department of Middle American Research, Tulane University, 1932), 394–409; Hassig, *War and Society in Ancient Mesoamerica*, 16, 31, 48, 83, 99, 140, 184–85n36; Hassig, *Aztec Warfare*, 90, 97, 116, 291nn119–20; Rice et al., “Defensive Architecture,” 132. The Inca of South America sometimes wore cane helmets. D’Altroy, *Incas*, 347. Olmec helmets are represented on human figurines. David Cheetham, “Early Olmec Figurines from Two Regions: Style as Cultural Imperative,” in *Mesoamerican Figurines: Small-Scale Indices of Large-Scale Social Phenomena*, ed. Christina T. Halperin et al. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 164–65.
94. Hassig, *War and Society in Ancient Mesoamerica*, 48, 83.
95. Hassig, *Aztec Warfare*, 291nn119.
96. Hassig, *War and Society in Ancient Mesoamerica*, 83.
97. Budvarson, *Book of Mormon Examined*, 36; Fraser, *What Does the Book of Mormon Teach?*, 59, 61.
98. Follett, *War and Weapons of the Maya*, 395; Robicsek, “Weapons of the Ancient Maya,” 374. Some Inca warriors “protected their chests and backs with plates of metal.” D’Altroy, *Incas*, 347.
99. Fraser, *What Does the Book of Mormon Teach?*, 59, 61; Fraser erroneously claims that all weapons and armor in the Book of Mormon were made of metal. Fraser, *Is Mormonism Christian?*, 142; John L. Smith, “What about Those Gold Plates?,” *Utah Evangel* 33, no. 6 (1986): 8; White, *Letters to a Mormon Elder*, 168–69.
100. D’Altroy, *Incas*, 345.
101. Patricia de Fuentes, ed. and trans., *The Conquistadors: First-Person Accounts of the Conquest of Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 10.
102. Francis Augustus MacNutt, *De Orbo Novo: The Eight Decades of Peter Martyr D’Anghera* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1912), 2:16.
103. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *Native Races* (San Francisco: History Company, 1886), 2:408.
104. Daniel G. Brinton, *The American Race: A Linguistic Classification and*

*Ethnographic Description of the Native Tribes of North and South America* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1901), 138.

105. Fraser, *Is Mormonism Christian?*, 142–43.
106. Hassig, *War and Society in Ancient Mesoamerica*, 76, 85, 141. For South American armies, see D'Altroy, *Incas*, 321–50. Although not of the same size and scale as armies in South America and Mesoamerica, actual armies, not just small raiding parties, also likely existed in the North American Southwest. Christopher Hernandez, “Battle Lines of the North American Southwest: An Inquiry into Prehispanic and Post-Contact Pueblo Tactics of War,” *Kiva: Journal of Southwestern Anthropology and History* 86, no. 1 (2020): 47–69.
107. Peck, *Gazeteer of Illinois*, 53.
108. For pre-Columbian armies numbering in the thousands and tens of thousands—and on rare occasions, hundreds of thousands—see Hassig, *Aztec Warfare*, 55–60; Thomas T. Veblen, “Native Population Decline in Totonicapan, Guatemala,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 67, no. 4 (1977): 484–99; Carmelo Saenz de Santa Maria, ed., *Obras historicas de Don Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzman* (Madrid: Real Academia Espanola, 1972), 2:24–25, 27–34, 290–91; Martin, *Ancient Maya Politics*, 228–29; Morgan Deane, “Nephite Ten Thousand,” in *From Sinners to Saints: Reassessing the Book of Mormon* (North Las Vegas, NV: Arsenal of Venice Press, 2018), 153–72; Scripture Central Staff, “Army Sizes,” Evidence 212, 5 July 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence/army-sizes. On the possible exaggeration of battle numbers, see Scripture Central Staff, “How Could So Many People Have Died at the Battle of Cumorah?,” KnoWhy 231, 15 November 2016, scripturecentral.org/knowhy/how-could-so-many-people-have-died-at-the-battle-of-cumorah.
109. See Scripture Central Staff, “4 Ways the New Maya Discoveries May Relate to the Book of Mormon.”
110. “Those who are particularly desirous of information concerning the millions of warriors, and the bloody battles in which more were slain than ever fell in all the wars of Alexander, Caesar, or Napoleon . . . would do well to read the ‘Book of Mormon.’” Peck, *Gazeteer of Illinois*, 53; Parsons, *Mormon Fanaticism Exposed*, 26. See Sheldon, *Mormonism Examined*, 118–19. Marshall, *Through America*, 157, wrote,

There is an account given in the work of perhaps the most disastrous battle on record, one in which we are told that 2,000,000 men were slain! Two hundred and thirty thousand had been killed in a previous engagement! Talk of our battle of Hastings, our Crecy, Poitiers, Waterloo, and other famous battles of modern times, why, they are mere a bagatelle compared with some of these (fictitious) civil engagements of the primitive Americans.
111. See Saenz de Santa Maria, *Obras historicas de Don Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzman*, 2:26, 28, 30, 32, 35; Diego Duran, *The History of the Indies of New Spain*, trans. Doris Heyden (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 282, 439; Alfredo Chavero, ed., *Obras historicas de Don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl* (Mexico: Editora Nacional, 1952), 1:58–59; Scripture Central

- Staff, "War Deaths," Evidence 213, 12 July 2021, [scripturecentral.org/evidence/war-deaths](http://scripturecentral.org/evidence/war-deaths).
112. Peck, *Gazeteer of Illinois*, 53; Parsons, *Mormon Fanaticism Exposed*, 26.
113. Ann Paludan, *Chronicle of the Chinese Emperors* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998), 112; Johan Norberg, *Progress: Ten Reasons to Look Forward to the Future* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2016), 95.
114. Chavero, *Obras historicas de Don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:58–59.
115. Robert Patterson, "Helaman's Stripling Warriors and the Principles of Hypovolemic Shock," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 35, no. 4 (2002): 135–41, [dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V35N04\\_149.pdf](http://dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V35N04_149.pdf).
116. Gregory Smith, "'All Bleeding Stops . . . Eventually': Helaman's Warriors and Modern Principles of Trauma Revisited," in *Steadfast in Defense of Faith: Essays in Honor of Daniel C. Peterson*, ed. Shirley S. Ricks, Stephen D. Ricks, and Louis C. Midgley (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2023), 223–43.
117. "Imagine Kaiser Wilhelm making such a request of the Allies, or vice versa!!" William Edward Biederwolf, *Mormonism Under the Searchlight* (Chicago: Glad Tidings Publishing, 1915), 19.
118. Scripture Central Staff, "Prearranged Battles," Evidence 182, 19 April 2021, [scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-prearranged-battles](http://scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-prearranged-battles).
119. Lynn V. Foster, *Handbook to Life in the Ancient Maya World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 156.
120. Origen Bachelier, *Mormonism Exposed, Internally and Externally* (New York: printed by the author, 1838), 22.
121. John L. Sorenson, "Last-Ditch Warfare in Ancient Mesoamerica Recalls the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000): 44–53, 82–83, [scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol9/iss2/8/](http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol9/iss2/8/); Bruce H. Dahlin, "The Barricade and Abandonment of Chunchucmil: Implications for Northern Maya Warfare," *Latin American Antiquity* 11, no. 3 (2000): 283–98; David Wahl et al., "Palaeoenvironmental, Epigraphic, and Archaeological Evidence of Total Warfare among the Classic Maya," *Nature Human Behavior* 3 (2019): 1049–54; Scripture Central Staff, "Total Warfare," Evidence 51, 19 September 2020, [scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-total-warfare](http://scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-total-warfare).
122. Martin, *Ancient Maya Politics*, 229.
123. Dahlin, "Barricade and Abandonment of Chunchucmil," 295–96.
124. "These sites give no indication of the real frequency of wars: first, because battles were probably fought in rural areas and, second, because fortifications around site centers could not protect vulnerable and necessary sustaining areas outside their walls" without large storage facilities. "Moreover, wars that did not result in the annihilation of the losing side's site center would probably be archaeologically invisible, for, presumably, sites that were successful in repelling an invasion would remove the barricade, repair the damage

its construction would have entailed, and restore public access to their site center. Similarly, survivors of a defeated population who were subsequently subjugated for tribute payments and the like would presumably have removed all traces of a barricade after that population had been pacified. Thus, barricades that have survived the ravages of time all appear to have been last ditch—but vain—efforts to save their urban population from annihilation. There are many reasons for waging wars of annihilation, but all require a sacrifice of future gains in the form of tribute, forced alliances, etc. . . . In the case of Chunchucmil, the most likely scenario is that its annihilation had something to do with eliminating its strategic advantage with respect to long-and medium-distance maritime trade and salt in relation to its many north coast and inland competitors who were further removed from the large consumption centers in highland and southern and central lowland Mesoamerica.” Dahlin, “Barricade and Abandonment of Chunchucmil,” 296; emphasis added.

125. Parsons, *Mormon Fanaticism Exposed*, 32.
126. Scripture Central Staff, “The Beheading of Shiz,” Evidence 17, 19 September 2020, [scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-the-beheading-of-shiz](https://scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-the-beheading-of-shiz); M. Gary Hadfield, “Neuropathology and the Scriptures,” *BYU Studies* 33, no. 2 (1993): 325; M. Gary Hadfield, “My Testimony, as an Academician, of God and of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” Latter-day Saint Scholars Testify, FAIR, April 2010, [fairlatterdaysaints.org/testimonies/scholars/m-gary-hadfield](https://fairlatterdaysaints.org/testimonies/scholars/m-gary-hadfield); C. S. Sherrington, “Decerebrate Rigidity, and Reflex Coordination of Movements,” *Journal of Physiology* 22 (1898): 319.
127. Jeremy T. Runnells, “CES Letter: My Search for Answers to Mormon Doubts,” CES Letter, updated October 2017, [read.cesletter.org/](https://read.cesletter.org/).
128. Ann Curry and Glenn Foard, “Where Are the Dead of Medieval Battles: A Preliminary Survey,” *Journal of Conflict Archaeology* 11, nos. 2–3 (2016): 61–77. Slavomil Vencel reports,

The number of bodies with wounds, be they artificially mummified or buried in peat bogs, is limited in size, space and time. Skeletons, constituting a commonly accessible source, do not exhibit causes of death by wounds in soft tissues of the body. Again, those periods when cremation was practiced widely or those regions with acid soils (where skeletons have either completely disintegrated or have been substantially corroded) yield no data at all.

Slavomil Vencel, “War and Warfare in Archaeology,” *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 3 (1984): 127. The identification of injuries in the archaeological record is

hindered by the fact that some unhealed (i.e., fatal) injuries are difficult to distinguish from secondary, post-mortem damage to the skeletal remains. Physical anthropology also fails to distinguish injuries sustained during combat from those acquired accidentally or as a result of violence not connected with warfare. The study of these injuries is further hampered by the fact that most wounds to soft body tissue are beyond archaeological recognition (those found on bog bodies

are not only unique, but difficult to date). Another complication arises from the periods when cremation was the prevalent burial practice, as this evidence is irretrievable. Arrowheads found embedded in calcified vertebrae are extremely rare. Moreover, archaeological sources fail to provide evidence of the large number of men lost in battle, and of the other war casualties that could not be buried.

Vencl, "Stone Age Warfare," in *Ancient Warfare: Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. John Carman and Anthony Harding (Gloucestershire, UK: Sutton, 1999), 57–58.

129. Vencl, "War and Warfare in Archaeology," 116–32; Vencl, "Stone Age Warfare," 57–70. David Webster observes that "identifiable weaponry is seldom, if ever, recovered in Maya graves, but only the lost durable parts (e.g. stone blades) would be recoverable in any case, and these would be difficult to distinguish between other tools and ritual objects." David Webster, "Ancient Maya Warfare," in *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, ed. Kurt A. Raaflaub and Nathan Stewart Rosenstein (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 356n20. Webster, "Review of Maya War," 181–82. Few weapons from Aztec times have survived. Take, for example, the *macuahuitl*, the Aztec sword. According to Ross Hassig, "there are no known surviving examples of the macuahuitl." Hassig, *Aztec Warfare*, 85. According to another specialist, remains of this weapon are "practically non-existent" even though the weapon is frequently mentioned in historical accounts of Aztec battles. Marco Antonio Cervera Obregón, *Guerreros Aztecas* (Madrid: Nowtilus, 2011), 40. Obregon notes, "If it were just from Mexican archaeological evidence alone, we might think that this weapon was hardly used by this people. Very few archaeological objects have been recovered." Marco Antonio Cervera Obregón, "The Macuahuitl: An Innovative Weapon of the Late Post-Classic in Mesoamerica," *Arms & Armour* 3, no. 2 (2006): 137. The number of these weapons in Mesoamerica at the time of the Spanish conquest must have numbered in the tens of thousands at the least. If surviving examples of the Aztec sword from five hundred years ago are so rare, what should we reasonably expect for those from the time of the Book of Mormon?

130. Key, *Book of Mormon in the Light of Science*, 68.

131. Eduard Seler, "Musical Instruments of Central America," in *Collected Works in Mesoamerican Linguistics and Archaeology*, 7 vols. (Culver City, CA: Labyrinthos, 1991), 3:78; Roberto Velásquez Cabrera, "Virtual Analysis of Maya Trumpets," *Danzas Mexicanas*, 12 February 2018, [danzas.mexicanas.com/analisis-virtual-de-trompetas-mayas/](http://danzas.mexicanas.com/analisis-virtual-de-trompetas-mayas/); Anna Stacy, "Of the Same Stuff as Gods: Musical Instruments among the Classic Maya," *Collegiate Journal of Anthropology* 2 (2014): [web.archive.org/web/20150211040438/http://anthrojournal.com/issue/may/article/of-the-same-stuff-as-gods-musical-instruments-among-the-classic-maya](http://web.archive.org/web/20150211040438/http://anthrojournal.com/issue/may/article/of-the-same-stuff-as-gods-musical-instruments-among-the-classic-maya).

132. Key, *Book of Mormon in Light of Science*, 67.

133. Stephen F. De Borhegyi, "Archaeological Synthesis of the Guatemalan Highlands," in *Archaeology of Southern Mesoamerica, part 1, Handbook of Middle American Indians*, ed. Gordon R. Willey (Austin: University of Texas



- Press, 1965), 6; H. E. D. Pollock, "Architecture of the Maya Lowlands," in *Archaeology of Southern Mesoamerica*, 397.
134. Key, *Book of Mormon in the Light of Science*, 67.
135. Scripture Central Staff, "Ladders," Evidence 168, 15 March 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-ladders.
136. Duran, *History of the Indies of New Spain*, 399; see also p. 421.
137. William M. Ringle, "The Art of War: Imagery of the Upper Temple of the Jaguars, Chichen Itza," *Ancient Mesoamerica* 20 (2009): 23.
138. Kirk Magleby, "Light from Guatemala," *Book of Mormon Resources* (blog), 3 March 2019, bookofmormonresources.blogspot.com/2019/03/light-from-guatemala.html.
139. "Archaeological, ethnographic, and linguistic records from Mesoamerica provide no evidence of a tent-making or tent-using tradition and, even more problematic suggest no available material for making tents." Matheny, "Does the Shoe Fit?," 299. According to Dan Vogel and Brent Metcalfe, "tents are described as being 'pitched,' portable, and reusable. Only with increasing difficulty do apologists accept the Book of Mormon at face value." Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe, *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), xiii
140. See Scripture Central Staff, "Tents," Evidence 173, 29 March 2021, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-tents; Duran, *History of the Indies of New Spain*, 153–55, 161–62, 177–78, 183–84, 228, 279, 377, 412.
141. Saenz de Santa Maria, *Obras historicas de Don Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzman*, 2:22.
142. Bacheleer, *Mormonism Exposed*, 17.
143. Hassig, *Aztec Warfare*, 63.
144. Fraser, *Is Mormonism Christian?*, 142–43.
145. Hassig, *War and Society in Ancient Mesoamerica*, 103. See also Miguel Covarrubias, *Mexico South: The Isthmus of Tehuantepec* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 195–96. The military acquisition and control of material goods and sources of wealth was a major component of Aztec policy.



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