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Lehi's Route to America

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Abstract: Traces Lehi's possible migration route following ocean currents from the Arabian Peninsula across the Pacific Ocean to Central America. Includes a discussion of the theory surrounding the origin of the Polynesian people

LEHI'S ROUTE TO AMERICA

IN WHICH IS SET FORTH ONE MAN'S VIEW ON A MOOTED QUESTION.

By C. DOUGLAS BARNES, Ph.D.

MANY Book of Mormon scholars will disagree with the point of view herein set forth, and it is presented here, not as the view of the Church, but as the speculation, opinion, and possible conclusion of one thoughtful student of the subject, and is submitted for what value it has as a creator of interest and stimulator of thought in these channels.

CONCERNING the migration of Lehi and his colony from Jerusalem, as disclosed in the Book of Mormon, Dr. James E. Talmage in *The Articles of Faith*, states:

The company journeyed somewhat east of south, keeping near the borders of the Red Sea; then changing their course to the eastward, crossed the peninsula of Arabia; and there, on the shores of the Arabian Sea, built and provisioned a vessel in which they committed themselves to Divine care upon the waters. Their voyage carried them eastward across the Indian Ocean, then over the South Pacific Ocean to the western coast of South America. (Page 271, 9th Edition.)

By referring to the conventional terrestrial globe and tracing the path as outlined by Dr. Talmage, it is clear that the point of embarkation was somewhere on the southeastern extremity of the Arabian peninsula. In order to reach the Americas from this point, it required traversing in excess of 13,000 miles, or more than halfway around the world. While it is unlikely that we shall ever have sufficient information to define precisely the path followed by that

group in reaching America, pertinent data have been accumulated which are quite illuminating and which lead to at least a rough definition of the probable path followed in the migration under discussion.

The ocean journey of Lehi, depending as it did upon natural agencies, such as wind and currents, for propelling the craft, undoubtedly occupied many months. Although not claimed in the Book of Mormon account of the journey,¹ which is quite condensed, it is logical to assume that the colony stopped as occasion demanded or opportunity presented to provision the craft and to replenish the water supply. The memory of these stops, or contact with lands and possibly peoples en route, may have been perpetuated through the centuries in the traditions of descendants of the Lehi colony, and we turn for such evidence to the Hawaiians, who putatively are among the posterity of the Lehi group.

As regards the mechanics of this protracted journey, it has been found

¹I Nephi 18.

that ocean currents exist which in proper season move eastward from the Arabian peninsula toward India and even to Sumatra. By taking advantage of mergings into other existing ocean current systems, it is possible to outline an ocean route to the Americas. These points will now be amplified.

STUDY OF OCEAN CURRENTS

QUOTING from *An Introduction to Oceanography*, by James Johnstone, D. Sc., Professor of Oceanography in the University of Liverpool:²

North of the equator the streaming of the Indian Ocean is dominated by the monsoon wind systems. Figure 60 (the upper one) represents the winter conditions when the North-East Monsoon has been established, while the lower figure shows the streaming set up in the conditions of the South-West Monsoon which blows during the summer months. . . .

. . . As a rule the heating and cooling effect of the continental land masses is insufficient to do more than set up local modifications of the prevailing wind currents, but the Indian Ocean, in its relation to the great and high Asiatic continent, is a striking exception. In the summer months the

²Pages 282-284. Publisher: The University Press of Liverpool, Ltd., Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., London, 1928.

DIAGRAM SHOWING A SPECULATIVE POSSIBILITY

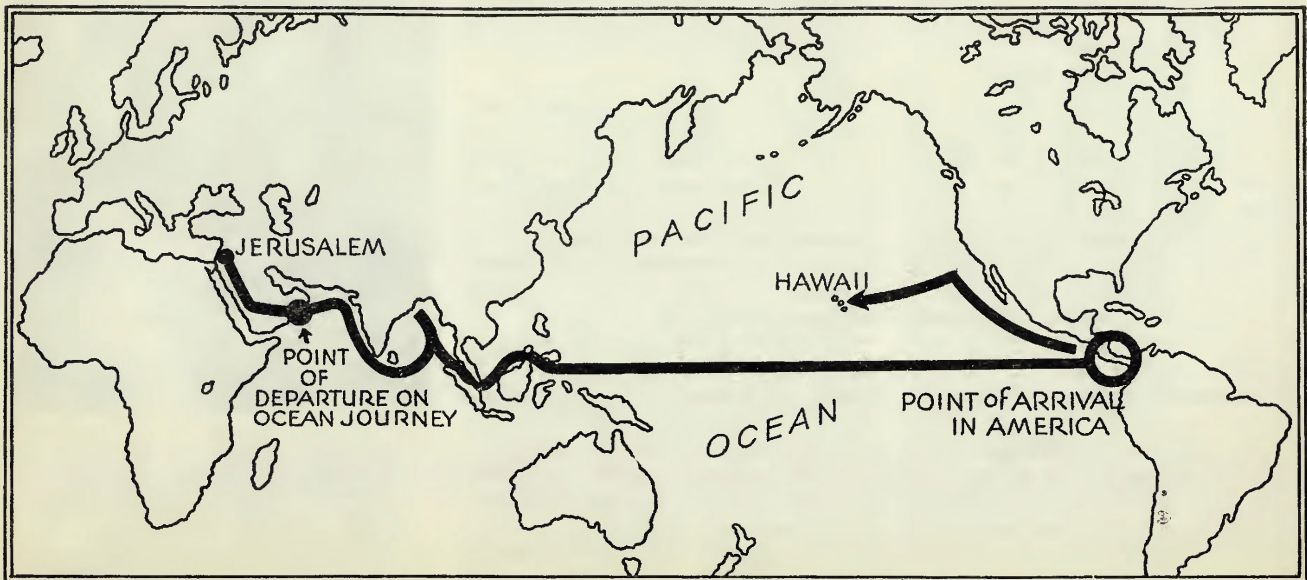




FIG. 60. THE CURRENT SYSTEMS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN.

The upper figure represents the generalized conditions during the winter months and the lower figure shows the summer conditions in that part of the Ocean where the circulation reverses with the season. (Continuous lines represent warm currents and broken lines cold ones.)

elevated lands become so strongly heated that a wind system, lasting for some months is established, this is the South-west Monsoon. In the winter months the continental land is strongly cooled and then a reversed condition is set up: the North-east Monsoon is established and blows also for some months.

The Figure 60 referred to is reproduced for reference. It is quite evident from an inspection of the lower chart of the figure that in summer months ocean currents (south-west monsoon drift) move eastward from the Arabian shore, touch India, and move into the Bay of Bengal. In winter months the northeast monsoon drift (cf. upper chart Figure 60) would be less favorable for an easterly migration since the currents move toward the African rather than the Indian Coast. Continuing again it is clear from the lower chart that there is a movement of water south-east from the Bay of Bengal, between Sumatra and the Malay peninsula, and on into the South China Sea. Also other currents in the South China Sea move northward past Borneo. In addition there is an eastward movement through the archipelago north of Borneo and just south of the Philippines and into the Pacific Ocean. At this point,

referring to Figure 59 (page 28) reproduced from the same text, an ocean stream running counter-current to the north and south equatorial streams moves eastward in about the 5° north latitude, finally dividing and reversing itself just off the shores of Central and South America. Thus by a series of currents a path from Arabia to America has been outlined.⁸

POINT OF ARRIVAL IN THE AMERICAS

IT is proposed by the author that the Lehi colony reached the Americas by means of the current combinations outlined above.

Provided the craft followed the natural ocean stream eastward across the Pacific Ocean, as described, it appears logical that the colony arrived at a point on the western shore of Central or South America, somewhere between the equator and 15° north latitude.

EXPANSION AND DIVISION OF THE LEHI COLONY

REVIEWING briefly the Book of Mormon history, the colony lived in the new land for a time in relative harmony. Eventually, however, a division occurred, based on religious principles in which the less righteous group followed Laman, one of the older sons of Lehi, while the righteous remained under the leadership of Nephi, a younger son of Lehi. In contrast to their brothers, the Nephites, and as a distinguishing mark set on them by the Lord, the Lamanites became more highly pigmented, and today we point to the American Indian, still carrying this pigmentation, as their descendants.

The colony as a whole grew and spread northward, ultimately and after several centuries, reaching a high state of civilization, as judged both by the written history in the Book and by the physical evidences found in the ruins in Central America. During this development the activities of a portion of the group extended again to the sea, and within

⁸An interesting account of a recent passage of a craft from Singapore, through the China Sea and finally eastward just south of the Philippines into the Pacific Ocean was published by Alan J. Villiers in the *National Geographic Magazine* (Feb., 1937, p. 221) under the title "North About." The feasibility of the journey is outlined in the following excerpt from the account: "From Singapore there are two routes by which a square-rigged ship may hope to reach Sydney, New South Wales. Either she may make the best of her way to the southward, through Soenda (Sunda) Strait, or around the north of Sumatra with the southeast monsoon, standing down the west coast of Australia and then running her longitude down in the wild west winds to the south of that continent; or she may go northward around Borneo and eastward into the Pacific, hoping that when that difficult stage of the voyage is past she may make her southing with the southeast trade."

approximately the century of Christ's advent, colonizers were being carried by boats under Hagoth to the land northward, and the claim is made in the record that at least two boat loads of people and provisions were lost at sea.⁴

It is naturally assumed that these marine activities extended into both the Pacific Ocean and Carribean Sea, and some students of the Book of Mormon claim it resulted in the transplanting of a portion of Lehi's descendants into the Hawaiian and other of the Polynesian islands, possibly representing the boat loads which were lost as just mentioned.⁵ The acceptance of a direct relationship between the Hawaiians and the descendants of the Lehi colony in America is important from the standpoint of what follows, for if it is established, it means that the progenitors of the Hawaiians originated in Jerusalem and came first to America as the Lehi colony, before migrating to the Islands. On this basis any information as to the travels of the Hawaiian progenitors may logically be applied to the travels of the original Lehi colony. With this in mind we shall review evidences of Polynesian origin and of their travels.

FORNANDER'S RESEARCH ON POLYNESIAN ORIGIN

JUDGE ABRAHAM FORNANDER some years ago, and with the help of well-educated native research assistants, investigated the traditions and folklore of the Polynesian races and his discoveries, which are quite illuminating, were presented in three volumes as: *An Account of the Polynesian Race: Its Origin and Migrations*.⁶ Certain pertinent data are summarized in the following excerpts:

That the reader may know at a glance the result to which my investigations in the Polynesian folk-lore, as well as its comparison with that of other peoples, have led me, it may be proper here at the outset to say that I believe that I can show that the Polynesian family can be traced directly as having occupied the Asiatic Archipelago, from Sumatra to Timor, Gilolo, and Philippines, previous to the occupation of that archipelago by the present Malay family; that traces, though faint and few, lead up through Deccan to the north-west part of India and the shores of the Persian Gulf; that, when other traces here fail, yet the language points farther north, to the Aryan stock in its earlier days, long before the Vedic ir-

⁴Alma 63:5-10; Helaman 3:14.

⁵*Improvement Era*, March, 1934, p. 164; Nov., 1935, p. 672; *Utah Genealogical Magazine*, January, 1933.

⁶These books were published in London: Volume 1, Second Edition and Volume 3, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1890; Volume 2, Trubner & Co., Ludgate Hill, 1880.

ruption in India; and that for long ages the Polynesian family was the recipient of a Cushite civilization, and to such an extent as almost entirely to obscure its own consciousness of parentage and kindred to the Aryan stock.⁷

How long the Polynesian family had dwelt in the Asiatic Archipelago ere it debouched in the Pacific there are now small means of knowing, hardly of forming even a conjecture. Its reminiscences of that period are not many, and are confused with memories of older date and of other habitats.⁸

The author may have startled some and shocked others by seeking a Polynesian ancestry beyond the Malay Archipelago; but their undoubted folklore, their legends, and chants, gave no warrant for stopping there. *They spoke of continents and not of islands, as their birthplace.* They referred to events in the far past which have hitherto been considered as the prehistoric heirlooms of Cushites and Semites alone.⁹

Referring to his earlier volume, he says:

To recapitulate in an inverse order the findings to which that folklore has led, I would briefly say that I have found a vague, almost obliterated, consciousness in some of their legends that the head, and front, and beginning of the Polynesians lay in a white (the Arian) race.

He found they must have come into intimate contact with early Cushite, Chaldeo-Arabian civilization, also evidence of "amalgamation" with the Davidian peoples south of Chaldea in India. Next they occupied the Asiatic Archipelago from Sumatra to Luzon and Timor.¹⁰

Probably there is no race upon earth which, in proportion to its numbers, has been the subject of so much interest and of such minute investigation as the Polynesian. This is owing not only to the interesting character of the race, but also to the mystery, as yet unsolved, which shrouds their origin, and to their extreme isolation. The evidence both of language and tradition points unmistakably to the East Indian Archipelago as at least a stage in their eastward migration.¹¹

Messrs. Logan and Hodgson discovered remarkable, and, as they believed, conclusive analogies between the languages and customs of the Bhotiya races and those of South-Eastern Malaysia and Polynesia. The researches of our author, however, as he believes, have tracked the footsteps of the first Polynesian emigrants still farther to the highlands of South-Western Asia, and revealed the impress of the ancient Cushite civilization in their religion and customs.¹²

Summarizing, Judge Fornander found evidence leading to the following conclusions concerning the Hawaiian progenitors:

1. They were originally a white race. 2. They came from the highlands of South-Western Asia. 3. They had contact with peoples south

of Chaldea in India (Northwestern India). 4. They touched Deccan (India, south of the Norbada River including the southern tip). 5. They contacted points in the Asiatic Archipelago bounded by Sumatra and Timor on the south to Luzon in the Philippines on the north.

Judge Fornander was unable to establish the time of arrival of the group at the archipelago, but genealogies and legends indicate that in roughly the first or second century A. D. properly organized migrations of Polynesians into the Pacific Ocean took place from the archipelago. He believed they went first to the Fiji Islands, although he states there appears to be nothing to indicate that some of the migratory expositions may not have pushed on to some of the eastern, northern, or southern groups of the Pacific now held by the Polynesians. Also he claims "that branch of the Polynesian family from which the oldest ruling line of Hawaiian chiefs claim descent arrived at the Hawaiian group during the sixth century of the Christian Era."¹³

Judge Fornander, in his discussion, raises a logical question which, if unanswered, might interfere with the acceptance of his theory of migration involving the archipelago as a stopping point. Briefly it is in substance: Why should they have pushed some thousands of miles into the Pacific Ocean before establishing themselves in new homes instead of stopping at islands closer to the point of embarkation?¹⁴ In answer he suggests that they were forced on

eastward by the superior forces of hostile peoples they found on the islands in their path.

CORRELATING FORNANDER DATA WITH BOOK OF MORMON HISTORY

ADMITTING that the Polynesian race came from the Lehi colony, then, as already pointed out, the same basic travel history should apply to both peoples. The Book of Mormon history and Judge Fornander's data coincide, in that originally a white race was involved, and this race came from or occupied in their travel southwestern Asia. The points of occupancy in northwestern India, southern India (Deccan) and the archipelago mentioned by Fornander, coincide with points mentioned earlier in defining the path of existing ocean currents.

It is interesting to note that the date of departure from the archipelago, and therefore the approximate date of arrival in the islands constituting their new homes, about the first or second century, A. D., is startlingly close to the time in which Hagoth and other ship builders already referred to were reported in the Nephite record as being active, and at which the two shiploads of people were missing at sea (roughly 55 B. C.).¹⁵

Perhaps the Book of Mormon even holds the answer to the question of Judge Fornander as to why the immigrants pushed so far eastward into the Pacific Ocean before settling and establishing homes.

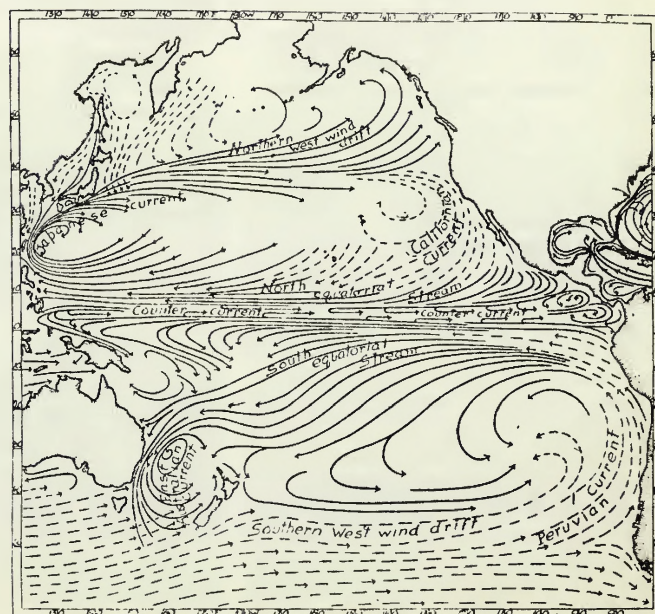
¹³Volume 2, page 2.
¹⁴Volume 1, page 32.

¹⁵Alma 63:5-10.

(Concluded on page 49)

FIG. 59. GENERAL SCHEME OF THE CIRCULATION IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

(Continuous lines represent warm currents and broken lines cold currents.)



⁷Volume I, page 2.
⁸Volume I, page 36.
⁹Page VI of the Preface to Volume II.
¹⁰Volume II, page 1.
¹¹Preface to Volume 3, page V, by Professor W. D. Alexander of Punahow College, Honolulu.
¹²Preface, Volume 3, page XI.

the March Sunday night conjoint. The following is a suggested program for that occasion. You will note it is slightly modified and in greater detail than the one in the Executives' Manual.

1. Preliminary Music: Bee-Hive Songs.
2. Bee-Hive Call by Bugle or Organ.
3. Bee-Hive Girls march up the aisles to soft, appropriate chapel music. Remain standing and sing the Bee-Hive Call.
4. Song Service: "I'll Serve the Lord While I am Young," "Let the Holy Spirit Guide," "Sunshine in the Soul," "Have I Done Any Good in the World Today." (Choose any two of the above.)
5. Prayer: Bee-Hive Girl.
6. Chorus by Bee-Hive Girls—"I Hear the Bees a Humming," "Spinning Song."
7. Words of Welcome: Ward Y. W. M. I. A. President or Ward Bishop.
8. Choral Reading: The Bee-Hive Promise with the Salute. (Girls should have Bands.)
9. Building the Band: A blue paper Band should be fastened where all the congregation can see it. A Bee-Hive girl pins on the awards (which have been cut from stiff paper or cardboard) on the Band as other girls, following the outline below explain and tell how they may be earned. The Bee-Hive girl who gives the talk which precedes the placing of the awards on the band should conclude by turning or pointing to it and stating that having completed the requirements she may now place the violets (substitute other awards) upon her band. When completed the Band should resemble the one on the cover of the Handbook. You may, of course, use other symbols.
 - a. "What our Emblem stands for." The purpose and ideals of the Bee-Hive Girls' organization presented by a Bee-Hive girl. (At the conclusion the brown bee-hive is pinned on the Band.)
 - b. "My Trial Flights." A Builder in the Hive gives the requirements of the Trial Flight and tells about one of the Trial Flights she enjoyed. (Hexagonal Cell is pinned on.)
 - c. "Filling Cells." A Builder in the Hive gives a short statement of how she filled a Foundation or Structural Cell and the requirements of the Builder's Rank. (Two violets are pinned on.)
 - d. Builder's Purpose.
 - e. "What our symbols do for us." Explanation of individual and Swarm symbols by Gatherer of Honey. (Symbols are pinned on.)
 - f. "Honey Gatherer's Song." (Gold bee is pinned on.)
 - g. "Making a Bee-Line." A Guardian of the Treasurer may tell about the Bee-Line she has most enjoyed making, and other requirements for this Rank. (Bee-Lines are pinned on.)
 - h. Guardian's Resolve.
 - i. "What an Honor Badge symbolizes" and requirements necessary to be an Honor Bee-Hive Girl. An explanation, demonstration or exhibit of the accomplishments for an Honor Badge. It would be well to have this given by an Honor Bee-Hive Girl of last year. (Honor Badges are then pinned on.)
10. Instrumental trio by Bee-Hive Girls.

- Suggestions: Brahms "Lullaby," "Minuet in G," Beethoven. "Melody in F," Rubenstein.
11. "As I have seen the Bee-Hive Girls on the Road to Happiness."
 - a. Personal observation of their activities.
 - b. How they need your help.
 - c. Their Theme Project: "I will taste the sweetness of service by neighborly acts for children."
 - d. Call for responses from the three Ranks.
 - e. One girl from each Rank tells of the joy they have found in carrying out the Theme-project.
 12. "A Prayer," by Bee-Hive Girls (p. 141).
 13. Closing prayer: Bee-Hive Girl.

It is always a pleasure to hear from you and the special activities of your Bee-Hive Swarms. The following report was received from Sadie Sorenson, Stake Bee-Keeper, Benson Stake:

The Benson Stake Bee-Hive Buzz was held October 17th at the stake tabernacle in Richmond. During the evening stunts and musical numbers were presented by the girls from each ward in the stake. As a special event of the program recognition was given to three stake and two ward Bee-Keepers who had become Honor Bee-Keepers during the summer. At the close of the program refreshments were served to one hundred forty girls and their Bee-Keepers. The girls then repeated the "Builder's Purpose," the "Guardian's Resolve," and sang "The Honey Gatherer's Song."

Lehi's Route to America

(Concluded from page 28)

Those involved in that stage of the migration, if Lehi's descendants, moved westward to the Islands, not eastward, coming immediately from the Americas, rather than directly from the East Indies. Naturally the islands adjacent to America would be given first consideration in selecting their new homes.

A FURTHER POINT

IF THE relationship of the Lehi colony to the Hawaiians is accepted, there is further evidence that Lehi followed the path defined, and in particular that he entered the Bay of Bengal as a step in his migration to the new land. Sugar cane, claimed to be a native of Bengal,¹⁸ was known in India prior to 327 B. C.,¹⁷ only 270 years after the Lehi colony passed en route to America, and it is probable that it was cultivated there well in advance of that date. Also it is claimed that it was cultivated exclusively in India until the 5th century,¹⁹ A. D. Yet it was found in the Hawaiian Islands by Captain Cook in 1778.

¹⁸Dr. Geo. Thomas Surface, (citing Karl Ritter, German scientist) in *The Story of Sugar* (D. Appleton & Co., 1910, page 15).

¹⁷*Industrial and Engineering Chemistry*, Vol. 27, p. 989, Sept., 1935.

Traditionally,²⁰ at least, the cane was carried to the islands by early Polynesian immigrants, ancestors of modern Hawaiians.

It would not be difficult to believe that Lehi, while en route to America, visited the Bengal shore, or adjacent islands, and that he added to his limited cargo, growing sugar cane plants, cuttings, or perhaps even seeds, which in some varieties are fertile, which later were a source of sugar for his people in America. Naturally, if these plants were available, new colonizers leaving the Americas would take with them the necessary starts, and it is proposed that groups migrating from continental America to the islands carried cane with them, ultimately establishing the plant in many islands, and particularly in the Hawaiian group.

The fact that early explorers in the Americas did not report the discovery of sugar cane need not be considered contradictory to the theory presented, since the native American discovered by explorers in the late 15th or the early 16th century was poorly adapted to agricultural pursuits. It would not be surprising to learn then that an industry depending on agriculture had wholly disappeared as the early civilization waned in America.

CONCLUSION

ON THE basis of material which has been presented, it is not difficult to harmonize the account of the journeying of the Polynesian progenitors with the story of Lehi's travels. It appears probable, therefore, that Lehi followed the ocean currents to the new land, as outlined above, and furthermore, that he made the journey in stages, stopping perhaps only for very brief periods at the various places perpetuated in the traditions and folklore of the Hawaiians. This information makes it possible to outline, tentatively at least, the possible path of the journey, as shown in the accompanying chart (p. 26). Since the early stages of the journey appear to have followed the southwest monsoon drift, it might be postulated that the Lehi colony embarked in their craft and left the Arabian peninsula in the spring or early summer, some twenty-five centuries ago.

²⁰Mr. R. S. Kuykendall, Assistant Professor of History, The University of Hawaii, letter to Dr. C. Douglas Barnes, May 15, 1936: "I have talked with members of the Departments of Botany and Anthropology here at the University and with one of our local anthropologists not connected with the University, and they seem to agree that the evidence indicates (they would not say 'proves') that sugar cane is not indigenous to the Hawaiian Islands, but that it was brought here by early Polynesian immigrants, ancestors of the modern Hawaiians."