ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM
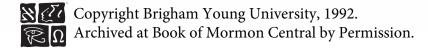
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of Mormon geography; however, most students of the problem agree that the hundreds of geographical references in the Book of Mormon are remarkably consistent—even if the students cannot always agree upon precise locations.

Of the numerous proposed external Book of Mormon geographies, none has been positively and unambiguously confirmed by archaeology. More fundamentally, there is no agreement on whether such positive identification could be made or, if so, what form a "proof" would take; nor is it clear what would constitute "falsification" or "disproof" of various proposed geographies. Until these methodological issues have been resolved, all internal and external geographies—including supposed archaeological tests of them—should, at best, be considered only intelligent conjectures.

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JOHN E. CLARK

BOOK OF MORMON LANGUAGE

The language of the Book of Mormon exhibits features typical of a translation from an ancient Near Eastern text as well as the stamp of nineteenth-century English and the style of the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. That the language of the Book of Mormon should resemble that of the KJV seems only natural, since in the time of the Prophet Joseph SMITH, the KJV was the most widely read book in America and formed the standard of religious language for most English-speaking people (see *CWHN* 8:212–18). Furthermore, the Book of Mormon shares certain affinities with the KJV: both include works of ancient PROPHETS of ISRAEL as well as accounts of part of the ministry of Jesus Christ, both are translations into English, and both are to become "one" in God's hand as collections of his word to his children (Ezek. 37:16–17; 1 Ne. 13:41; D&C 42:12).

LANGUAGES USED BY THE NEPHITES. Statements in the Book of Mormon have spawned differing views about the language in which the book was originally written. In approximately 600 B.C., NEPHI$_1$—the first Book of Mormon author and one who had spent his youth in JERUSALEM—wrote, "I make a record [the small plates of Nephi] in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians" (1 Ne. 1:2). One thousand years later, MORONI$_2$, the last Nephite prophet, noted concerning the PLATES of Mormon that "we have written this record . . . in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech. And if our plates [metal leaves] had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also. . . . But the Lord knoweth . . . that none other people knoweth our language" (Morm. 9:32–34). In light of these two passages, it is evident that Nephite record keepers knew Hebrew and something of Egyptian. It is unknown whether Nephi, Mormon, or Moroni wrote Hebrew in modified Egyptian characters or inscribed their plates in both the Egyptian language and Egyptian characters or whether Nephi wrote in one language and Mormon and Moroni, who lived some nine hundred years later, in another. The mention of "characters" called "reformed Egyptian" tends to support the hypothesis of Hebrew in Egyptian script. Although Nephi's observation (1 Ne. 1:2) is troublesome for that view, the statement is ambiguous and inconclusive for both views.

Nephite authors seem to have patterned their writing after the plates of brass, a record containing biblical texts composed before 600 B.C. that was in the possession of descendants of JOSEPH OF

EGYPT (1 Ne. 5:11–16). At least portions of this record were written in Egyptian, since knowledge of "the language of the Egyptians" enabled LEHI, father of Nephi, to "read these engravings" (Mosiah 1:2–4). But whether it was the Egyptian language or Hebrew written in Egyptian script is again not clear. Egyptian was widely used in Lehi's day, but because poetic writings are skewed in translation, because prophetic writings were generally esteemed as sacred, and because Hebrew was the language of the Israelites in the seventh century B.C., it would have been unusual for the writings of Isaiah and Jeremiah—substantially preserved on the brass plates (1 Ne. 5:13; 19:23)—to have been translated from Hebrew into a foreign tongue at this early date. Thus, Hebrew portions written in Hebrew script, Egyptian portions in Egyptian script, and Hebrew portions in Egyptian script are all possibilities. If the brass plates came into being while the Israelites were still in Egypt, then earlier portions (e.g., prophecies of Joseph in Egypt) were possibly written in Egyptian and later portions (e.g., words of Jeremiah) in Hebrew.

Concerning Book of Mormon composition, Mormon 9:33 indicates that limited space on the GOLD PLATES dictated using Egyptian characters rather than Hebrew. In Lehi's day, both Hebrew and Egyptian were written with consonants only. Unlike Hebrew, Egyptian had bi-consonantal and even triconsonantal signs. Employing such characters—particularly in modified form—would save space.

Written characters were handed down and altered according to Nephite speech (Morm. 9:32). This observation suggests that at least later generations of Nephites used Egyptian characters to write their contemporary spoken language, an altered form of Hebrew. It is extremely unlikely that a people isolated from simultaneous contact with the two languages could have maintained a conversational distinction between, and fluency in the two languages over a thousand-year period. Thus, if Egyptian characters were altered as the living language changed, then the Nephites were probably using such characters to write their spoken language, which was largely Hebrew.

Though some of Lehi's group that left Jerusalem may have spoken Egyptian, a reading knowledge of the script on the brass plates would have allowed them to "read these engravings" (Mosiah 1:4). But the possibility that Lehi's colony could maintain spoken Egyptian as a second language through a thousand years without merging it with Hebrew or losing it is beyond probability. Therefore, the fact that the Nephites had "altered" the Egyptian characters according to their "manner of speech" underscores the probability that they were writing Hebrew with Egyptian characters. In addition, Moroni's language (c. A.D. 400) was probably different enough from that of Lehi (c. 600 B.C.) that reading Lehi's language may have required as much study in Moroni's day as Old English requires of modern English-speaking people.

LANGUAGE AMONG NATIVE AMERICANS. Because Moroni's time represents a near midpoint between Lehi and the present, a consideration of the near end of the continuum could be helpful. The vague picture presented by statements in the text might be brought into focus by examining American Indian languages. The time depth from Latin to modern Romance languages is only slightly less than that from Lehi to the present. Similarities among Romance languages are plentiful and obvious, while language similarities between Native American languages and Hebrew or Egyptian are generally viewed as neither plentiful nor obvious. Though some professionals have alluded to similarities, no study has yet convinced scholars of Near Eastern links with any pre-Columbian American language.

One study, however, holds promise for demonstrating links to the Uto-Aztecan language family (Stubbs, 1988). Though other language groups offer suggestive leads, Uto-Aztecan yields more than seven hundred similarities to Hebrew, in phonological, morphological, and semantic patterns consistent with modern linguistic methods. While a handful of Egyptian words are identifiable, they are minimal compared to their Hebrew correspondents.

HEBRAISMS IN THE BOOK OF MORMON. Many typical Hebrew language patterns have been identified in the Book of Mormon, though several are also characteristic of other Near Eastern languages. For example, the cognate accusative, literarily redundant in English, is used in Hebrew for emphasis: "They feared a fear" (Ps. 14:5, Hebrew text). Similar structures appear in the Book of Mormon: "to fear exceedingly, with fear" (Alma 18:5), another possible translation of the same cognate accusative (cf. 1 Ne. 3:2; 8:2; Enos 1:13).

Hebrew employs prepositional phrases as adverbs more often than individual adverbs, a feature typical of Book of Mormon language: "in

haste" (3 Ne. 21:29) instead of "hastily" and "with gladness" (2 Ne. 28:28) instead of "gladly."

Tvedtnes has noted a possible example of Hebrew agreement: "This people *is* a free people" (Alma 30:24; emphasis added). In English, "people" is usually considered grammatically plural, but in Hebrew it is often singular. While this phrase in Alma may have been verbless, it may also have contained the third-person singular pronoun /hu/ placed between the two noun phrases or at the end as an anaphoric demonstrative functioning as a copula verb. Uto-Aztecan Indian languages also have the word /hu/, which is a third-person singular pronoun in some languages but a "be" verb in others.

Possession in English is shown in two constructs—"the man's house" and "the house of the man"—but only the latter construct is employed in Hebrew. The lack of apostrophe possession in the Book of Mormon is consistent with a translation from the Hebrew construct. Further, the "of" construct is common for adjectival relationships in Hebrew. Correspondingly, the Book of Mormon consistently employs phrases such as "plates of brass" (1 Ne. 3:12) instead of "brass plates" and "walls of stone" (Alma 48:8) rather than "stone walls."

Sentence structures and clause-combining mechanisms in Hebrew differ from those in English. Long strings of subordinate clauses and verbal expressions, such as those in Helaman 1:16–17 and Mosiah 2:20–21 and 7:21–22, are acceptable in Hebrew, though unorthodox and discouraged in English: "Ye all are witnesses . . . that Zeniff, who was made king, . . . he being over-zealous, . . . therefore being deceived by . . . king Laman, who having entered into a treaty, . . . and having yielded up [various cities], . . . and the land round about—and all this he did, for the sole purpose of bringing this people . . . into bondage" (Mosiah 7:21–22).

Frequent phrases such as "from before" and "by the hand of" represent rather literal translations from Hebrew. For example, "he fled from before them" (Mosiah 17:4), instead of the more typically English "he fled from them," portrays the common Hebrew compound preposition /millifne/.

While many words and names found in the Book of Mormon have exact equivalents in the Hebrew Bible, certain others exhibit Semitic characteristics, though their spelling does not always match known Hebrew forms. For example, "Rabbanah" as "great king" (Alma 18:13) may have affin-ities with the Hebrew root /rbb/, meaning "to be great or many." "Rameumptom" (Alma 31:21), meaning "holy stand," contains consonantal patterns suggesting the stems /rmm/ramah/, "to be high," and /tmm/tam/tom/, "to be complete, perfect, holy." The /p/ between the /m/ and /t/ is a linguistically natural outgrowth of a bilabial /m/ in cluster with a stop /t/, such as the /p/ in /assumption/ from /assume + tion/, and the /b/ in Spanish /hombre/ from Latin /homere/.

Claims that Joseph Smith composed the Book of Mormon by merely imitating King James English, using biblical names and inventing others, typically exhibit insensitivities about its linguistic character. Names such as "Alma" have been thought peculiar inventions. However, the discovery of the name "Alma" in a Jewish text (second century A.D.), the seven hundred observed similarities between Hebrew and Uto-Aztecan, literary patterns such as chiasmus, and numerous other features noted in studies since 1830 combine to make the fabrication of the book an overwhelming challenge for anyone in Joseph Smith's day.

[*See also* Book of Mormon Authorship; Book of Mormon Literature; Book of Mormon Names; Book of Mormon, Near Eastern Background; Book of Mormon Translation by Joseph Smith.]

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BOOK OF MORMON LITERATURE

Although understated as literature in its clear and plain language, the Book of Mormon exhibits a wide variety of literary forms, including intricate Hebraic poetry, memorable narratives, rhetori-