

NEPHITE-LAMANITE-MONGOLIAN ANCESTRY
OF THE AMERICAN INDIANS

It is beyond any question true that some of the tribes of American Indians have a wholly or partially Mongolian ancestry. Any position to the contrary would be directly in the teeth of overwhelming evidence by which this fact is established. The close affinity between certain Eskimo tribes on the eastern side of the Bering Strait with those on the Siberian side is well known; and the recovery of skeletal remains by Alex Hrdlicka and others seems to indicate with certainty that there was a migration in ancient times across the Bering Strait from northeast Asia. It should be remembered that as used in anthropology the word "Mongolian" or "Mongoloid" does not mean Chinese, but has reference to a racial type of which they, the Japanese, Siberians, Eskimos and others appear to be offshoots.

For the foregoing reasons, no missionary of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints should say that *all* American Indians are descended from Israel. Neither is it proper to say that no American Indians are descended from Mongolian sources. It is equally improper to assert that Indians may not be descended from both sources, and very probably others as well. The amalgamation of centuries has made definitive boundaries of descent very difficult to trace, and in most cases truly impossible. In times past, as now, some loose language has been used in talks about the Lamanites and the living remnants of that house, from which it might be inferred that all American Indians are of the house of Israel. Some such intimations are deducible from non-technical talks made by early leaders in the Church. However, when these discourses are read with care, it will be seen that in each instance sweeping generalizations were not intended to be critical analyses of racial ancestries, nor intended to exclude migrations from other nations and intermarriages with Nephite or Lamanite people.

While there are a few scientists who adhere to the notion that America was populated from Mongolian sources exclusively, that idea has been so thoroughly discredited in modern research as to be no longer tenable, and it does not now express the consensus of scientific opinion. In 1949 the American Bureau of Ethnology published the new Handbook of South American Indians.¹ In Vol. 5, p. 747, the editor, Dr. Julian H. Steward, sums up his views of the matter, he being the

¹Bureau of Ethnology Bulletin No. 143.

strongest exponent of the Mongolian theory of our day. Even he finds it necessary to make concessions in this regard. He says:

“Racially, the American Indian is predominantly Mongoloid. He is therefore, most closely related to the people of Asia and was probably derived from Asia by way of Bering Strait. Some anthropologists have seen Mediterranean, and other non-Mongolian strains in the Indian. *This thesis cannot be disproved, but unless it be postulated that these STRAINS CAME FROM COMPARATIVELY RECENT ARRIVALS*, it involves a genetic assumption that is difficult to defend; that several racial prototypes could intermix for hundreds, if not thousands of years and genes subsequently segregate out in the original combinations, a chance of one in thousands. Though predominantly, if not entirely Mongoloid, the Indian was extremely variable in head form, stature and other characteristics.” (Emphasis added.)

It will be seen from the quoted statement from the highest authority among those who adopt the Mongoloid theory (a) that it cannot be disproved that non-Mongolian sources provide the ancestry of American Indians, and (b) that the whole picture is changed if a “comparatively recent arrival” of such ancestors is postulated. The Book of Mormon provides exactly that postulate, and the era of arrivals is certainly within the ethnological definition of “comparatively recent.”

The physical evidences thoroughly disprove the notion of exclusive mongoloid ancestry. Among the inhabitants of central America in modern days Mongoloid and Semitic characteristics are found side by side and commonly intermingled. Certain recovered artifacts are the complete physical demonstration of Semitic (Hebrew) relationship. A recent study has been made in this field by Milton R. Hunter of the First Council of Seventy and Thomas S. Ferguson, in the book entitled *Ancient America and the Book of Mormon*. This book should be examined, and in particular the Mongoloid Mayan head (post Book of Mormon era) should be compared with the Semitic head (pages 253 and 254). The headdress of the Semite is so near-eastern that there can be no possible doubt. When the curved Jewish nose and the characteristic Hebrew lips and chin, eye cavities and brows are taken into account and compared with the Mongoloid face and headdress, it would take a very obstinate mind to fail to see the racial distinction. An inquirer will be well repaid for an examination of Chapter 19 of this cited work.

In the excellent work *Ancient Civilizations of the Andes* (Philip A. Means, director, National Museum of Archeology, Lima, Peru, published by Scribners, 1942) Dr. Means has taken care to indicate that while he believes there were migrations across the Bering Strait, he also believes (page 41) that “sporadic groups of current borne and wind blown mariners might have arrived on one part or another of

the American coast, bearing with them a mariners version of this or that Old World culture." That is precisely what the Book of Mormon refers to, a group about 2000 B. C., a group about 600 B.C., and another shortly afterward, current and wind borne, who reached American shores.

There are numerous studies to be found, and in almost any well provided public library, involving the affinities between languages of the near east and the modern languages of the many Indian groups. To the extent that these are truly scientific studies, and not, as many of them appear to be, products of unskilled imagination, or written with an "axe to grind," they reflect the strong probability that linguistic factors in ancestral American tongues are not Mongoloid, but are near eastern, consistent with the Book of Mormon account. See inter alia: Bancroft's *Native Races*, and *Jakeman*, infra.

Some reference should be made here to the matters of the occurrence of the Mongolian spot and the epicanthic fold among Mayan children. Dr. Sylvanus Morley pointed to the occurrence of the characteristically Asiatic features as an indication of Mongoloid ancestry of the Mayas. During the days of his "Aryan" obsession, Adolph Hitler did the world a service on this point. In his effort to prove Germanic descent from a master race, Hitler set one of his top ethnologists on the trail of the Mongolian spot and the epicanthic fold, and established beyond question its occurrence in Germans, Irish, Russians, English, etc. thoroughly establishing the fact that while these physical characteristics are often found among Mongolians, they are by no means peculiar to them, and may and often do occur in Caucasian families and anywhere else. Even Dr. Morley fell into the too-easy human error of reaching a generalization upon inadequate survey.

Recent excavations in southern Mexico now appear to have clearly established an Egyptian connection in that area dating to Book of Mormon times. See Ferguson, *One Fold and One Shepherd*, p. 23 passim, for photographic proof. Dr. Wells Jakeman has produced similar proofs photographically in his *The Origin and History of the Mayas*, p. 131 seq. extending the proof to Caucasian types as well.

A series of most fascinating studies has been recently undertaken concerning the blood types of American Indians. As having a bearing on ancestry, it is a curious fact that in many of the American Indian tribes there occurs a rare blood type, common among them, which never occurs among Mongolians, establishing beyond any controversy that the tribes in which the type occurs are not Mongolian ancestry, blood types being hereditary. Copies of the study may be procured from Brigham Young University or through any bookstore.²

A recent statement by Pres. Bruce McConkie of the First Council of Seventy is perhaps as accurate a statement of the position taken

²Haws, *The American Indian and the Blood Groups*.

by the leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on this matter as any:

“It is quite apparent that groups of Orientals found their way over the Bering Strait and gradually moved southward to mix with the Indian peoples.”³

He also adds that there are evidences that “a colony of Scandinavians” attempted to set up a settlement in America 500 years before Columbus, and that “an unspecified number of groups of people probably found their way from the old to the new world in pre-Columbian times. Out of all these groups would have come the American Indians as they were discovered in the 15th Century.”

It does the Church little credit for any of its members to quarrel with facts. It is the truth which the Church proclaims, whatever may be its source, and once ascertained it must fit into the church concept. Our knowledge of America, north, south and central in pre-Columbian times is most scanty, in spite of all that has been and is being done to write its history. This we know.

The Book of Mormon is a part of that history only, but should not be considered more than that. It is no more the history of all peoples and doings of past ages on the American continents than the Bible is a history of all the peoples and nations of the East. Each covers its own time and provenance and makes no pretense beyond that.

It is to be expected, and may even now be said with certainty that the true ethnological history of American populations in ancient times is much more complex than any of our ancestors dreamed it to be.

Whatever else may be said, this much is certain now: Many American Indians are of mixed blood, very much like the mixtures produced in modern America, the “melting pot” of nations. The Book of Mormon attests the presence of the blood of Israel. It is not in the least impugned by extraneous proof that other blood, by other migrations, found this land and mingled with the peoples there..

³*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 31.