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Laman Found, Chapter I

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Abstract: Citing early Spanish writers and historians, the author demonstrates that the name “Laman” existed among the Indians at least as early as the time of Columbus’ discovery of America. The first part introduces the author's argument.

LAMAN FOUND

By Ariel L. Crowley, L.L.B.

Chapter I

THE question is often asked: Has any trace ever been found of the name *Laman* used among the Indian tribes at or immediately following the time of the discovery of America?

The Lamanite nation, according to the Book of Mormon, although the subject of a curse,¹ succeeded² in the end of the fourth and in the beginning of the fifth centuries A.D. in overwhelming the vice-weakened Nephite people.³ At that time the dominant Lamanite factions were at war not only with the Nephites, whom they destroyed, but also within their own factions.⁴ All Book of Mormon evidence points to the survival, at the close of Book of Mormon history (about 421 A.D.) of a very numerous people identified by the names *Laman* and *Lamanite*.⁵

It seems reasonably probable, accepting the truth of the Book of Mormon narrative, that even though decimation of numbers might be expected from continual internecine wars, and although adoption of separate factional names was the common practice,⁶ some trace of the name *Laman* could have survived the passage of ten centuries which intervened before the discovery of America.

On the one hand it would not be surprising if the name had been wholly lost as the systems of writing and entire civilizations found in recent archeological research in Mexico, Central and South America were lost;⁷ on the other hand identification of a people in America under the name *Laman* or any variation of it as of the time of founding of the Spanish missions, particularly in records not accessible to Joseph Smith in his lifetime, would strongly corroborate the Book of Mormon and stand as direct evidence of its truth.

There is such evidence.

In the year 1772 there was published in Mannheim, Germany, in the German language, a work entitled *Nachrichten von der Americanischen Halbinsel Kalifornien*, which is a record of the missionary

labors of Jacob Baegert, a German Jesuit missionary of the Catholic Church.⁸ The work remained in obscurity, untranslated into English, until 1863, when it was translated by Charles Rau and published in the 1863 and 1864 reports of the board of regents of Smithsonian Institution, under the title, "*An Account of the Aboriginal Inhabitants of the Californian Peninsula*, as given by Jacob Baegert, a German Jesuit Missionary who lived there seventeen years during the second half of the last century."

In Chapter 10 of his work, Jacob Baegert says:⁹

Leaving aside a great many dialects and offshoots, six entirely different languages have thus far been discovered in California, namely, the *Laymona*, about the mission of Loreto; the *Cotshimi*, in the mission of Xavier, and others towards the north; the *Utchiti* and the *Pericua* in the south, the still unknown language spoken by the nations whom Father Linck visited in 1766 during his exploration of the southern part of the peninsula; and lastly the *Waicuri* language, of which I am now about to treat, having learned as much of it as was necessary for conversing with the natives.

The name *Laymon* (an obvious phonetic equivalent of *Laman*) was not only the name of the tongue spoken but also of the people who spoke it. Miguel Venegas, Spanish historian, wrote,¹⁰

These native tribes belonged to three main groups or families. In the south from San Lucas to the 24th parallel lived the *Pericues* or *Edues*. To this tribe belonged the troublesome *Guaycuras* who inhabited the coast between LaPaz and Mission Loreto. The second group, in the immediate vicinity of this same mission, were members of the *Monqui* family. The largest clan, known as the *Chochimis* or *Laymones*, lived in the northern part of the peninsula.

Somewhat earlier, Eusebio Francisco Kino (1644-1711) in his *Historical Memoir of Pimeria Alta*,¹¹ quoted the following from a letter which was written by the Catholic priest Francisco Maria Picolo of the Company of Jesus prepared at Guadalajara in response to the royal cedula of July 17, 1701:

Father Rector Juan Maria having now discovered on the north side and I on the south and west a copious harvest, we divided into two missions, and soon we noticed that there was mingling in them of nations of different languages, one, the *Monqui*, which we already knew, and the other the *Laimon*, which we did not know. Immediately we set about with all diligence to learn the latter, and because it is the dominating language, and appeared to be the general one in this extensive kingdom, with continued study we learned it quickly and in it we preach continually and teach the Christian doctrine to the *Laimones* as in the *Monqui* to the *Monquis*.

Dr. R. G. Latham, the early and eminent English philologist, in his little-known *Comparative Philology*,¹² turned his attention to the languages and people of Lower California and wrote:

Of recent notices of any of the languages of Old California, *eo nomine*, I know none. In the *Mithridates* the information is pre-eminently scanty.

WITH no traditions explaining their origin, or the splitting into innumerable tribes incessantly at war with one another, the Indians are at a loss about knowledge of events occurring before their own birth.

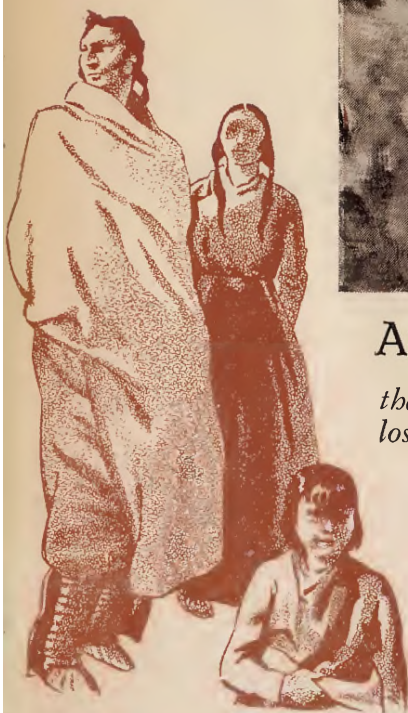
According to the only work which I have examined at first hand, the *Nachrichten von der Americanischen Halbinsel Kalifornien* (Mannheim, 1772; in the *Mithridates*, 1773), the anonymous author of which was a Jesuit missionary in the middle parts of the peninsula, the languages of Old California were

1. The *Waikur*, spoken in several dialects
2. The *Utshiti*
3. The *Layamon*
4. The *Cochimi*, north and
5. The *Pericu*, at the southern extremity of the peninsula
6. A probably new form of speech used by some tribes visited by Linck



THE writings of Francisco Maria Picolo, Catholic priest of the Company of Jesus (in 1701), the written records of Father Taraval, another Catholic priest, and the voluminous scholarly report of Jacob Baegert, a German Jesuit missionary of the Catholic Church to Lower California nearly two hundred years ago, all give strong identification of a people in America under the name of Laman or variations of it, as they found these tribes at the founding of the Spanish missions.

NOT accessible to Joseph Smith during his lifetime nor long afterwards, these documents strongly corroborate the Book of Mormon and stand as direct evidence of its truth.



AN Indian often does not know the names of his own parents or who they were if he should happen to have lost them during his infancy.

and Laymon were dialects of it, how far they were separate substantive languages, is not very clearly expressed.

Elsewhere from the notes of the earliest authorities, the following may be cited:

The Jesuit Francisco Maria Picolo, in his *Memoir*, wrote of the tribes in Lower California: "Some speak the language of Monqui, the others speak the *Laimone* language."¹³

Ducrué, in *Murr, Nachrichten*,¹⁴ says: "*Dreyerley Sprachen in Californien, die de los Picos, dann die de los Waicuros, und unlich die de los LAYMONES.*"

Hassel, in *Mexico Guatemala*,¹⁵

listed the tribes as "*Die Pericu; die Waicura; die Laymon; die Cochimi,*" in the area under consideration.

Muhlenfordt, in *Mejico*,¹⁶ details the linguistic families as "*Pericues, Monquis, Cochimas, Laimones, Utchitas, and Incas.*"

In 1941 Gerard Decorme, a priest of the Society of Jesus, published a work *La Obra De Los Jesuitas Mexicanos*¹⁷ in which he comments upon the studies of the Spaniard Pimental as follows:¹⁸

Pimentel simplifies too much when he reduces the languages of California to two families, the Cochimi or *Laimon* in the north and the Guaycura or Monqui in the south (Guaycura, Uchita, Cora, Concho or Lauretano). P. Taraval recognizes three families from which come two others, which it is necessary to learn, although he places them as indistinct. P. Juan Luyando, judges that there are really five: the Liguí, which is spoken in Loreto and Santiago

(Continued on following page)

This is what we learn from what we may call the Mannheim account; the way in which the author expresses himself being not exactly in the form just exhibited, but to the effect that, besides the Waikur with its dialects, there were five others.

The Waikur proper, the language which the author under notice was most especially engaged on, and which he says that he knew sufficiently for his purposes as a missionary is the language of the middle part of the peninsula. How far the Utshiti

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Ligui; the Monchi or Monqui which they speak in Dolores and La Paz; the Guaycura and Uchiti in Todos Santos and Santiago; the Pericu in San Jose del Cabo and Cochimi in San Jose; San Miguel, La Purisima. Santa Rosalia, Guadalupe, San Ignacio and all the northern discovered territory. All these have their dialects almost on every ranch and varying as much as Spanish from Portuguese. Thus in Cochimi or Laimon: *Tamaa* means people, in St. Jose they say *Tamo*, in Guadalupe, *Tama*, in San Ignacio *Tomo*, in Santa Rosalia *Tamoc*, and thus in other vowel sounds: some say *aa*, others *ee*, others *oo*, or even confuse some with others. The first outline of vocabulary and doctrine in Cochimi is that of P. Kine (cf. Bolton in his life, page 227). The best work in Cochimi owes itself to P. Miguel del Barco. In Ligui (Edit, Noe, Concho, Lauretano) the professors Goni and Copart were the first.

In a letter to the author dated July 27, 1949, Sr. Gerard Decorme clarified the matter somewhat further as follows:

Father Taraval put three tongues in California, Father Luyando, five:

Ligui, spoken in Loreto and Ligui, Monchi or Monqui, in Dolores, La Paz; Guaycura and Uchiti in Todos Los Santos and Santiago; Pericu in S. Jose del Cabo; Cochimi or Laimon in S. Jose, S. Miguel, La Purisima, Santa Rosalia, Guadalupe and all north. All of them had their dialects in each locality, viz., Laimon or Cochimi: *Tamaa* means people; in S. Jose they say *Tamo*; in Guadalupe, *Tama*, in San Ignacio *Tomo*; in Santa Rosalia *Tamoc*. The best work in Laimon is by Fr. Miguel del Barco. Fr. Helen wrote a catechism in Cochimi.

It is a little singular that Sr. Decorme should select as illustrative of the language of Laman the word *tamaa* (people), very close in its essentials to the Hebrew *'am* (people). The progress from the difficult, rough, guttural sound of the Hebrew letter *ayin* to ease of the *t* in *tamaa*, in the speech of a people descended from Hebrew sources, retaining the *am* root and the meaning intact, is readily understandable. A little farther north the word became *Pama* in the same way.¹⁹

The name *Laman* assumed, as is seen above, various spellings, when transliterated from the spoken tongue of the natives into the languages of the Europeans. In addition to those cited, it sometimes took the form "Limon." It was so used in plural form in *The Indian Tribes and Languages of the Peninsula*,²⁰ where it is said:

Between San Fernando and Molege were the Limonies, divided, going from the north, into the Cagnaquets, Adals and Kada-Kamans. From Molege to Loreto were the purer Cochimies or Guaicuris, or Vicuras, whom the Jesuits assert were of the same language as the Limonies.

In 1891 the name was rendered, in the plural form of *Lamans* by Elisee Reclus, in *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*.²¹ The passage is of significance:

The Chontals appear to be related to the Lencas of Honduras; their language is distinct both from Aztec and Maya, and they still number about 30,000, mostly designated by the names of the river inhabited by them. Some, however, bear distinct names, such as the Pantasmas of upper Segovia, the Cucras following lower down, the Carcas, Wulwas (Uluas), *Lamans*, Melchoras, Siquias, and the Ramas of the Rio Mico, rudest of all the aborigines.

The significance of the passage lies in the reference to a possible origin in Honduras. The tribe of Laman described by Jacob Baegert certainly was not indigenous to lower California, which was in those times, and still is, in less measure, a place of great hardship and small natural attractions.²² Baegert uses blunt language:

It remains now to state my opinion concerning the place where the Californians came from, and in what manner they affected their migration to the country they now occupy. They may have come from different localities, and either voluntarily or by some accident or compelled by necessity; but that people should have migrated to California of their own free will, and without compulsion, I am unable to believe. America is very large, and could easily support fifty times its number of inhabitants on much better soil than that of California. How, then, is it credible that men should have pitched, from free choice, their tents amidst the inhospitable dreariness of these barren rocks? It is not impossible that the first inhabitants may have found by accident their way across the sea from the other

THERE MUST BE DREAMS

By Catherine E. Berry

MAN does not live by bread alone;
His spirit must be fed,
There should be hope, encouragement—
His footsteps must be led
By some abiding faith in life,
In God and in himself,
That he may master all defeats,
Put failure on the shelf.
There must be dreams to feed his heart,
Beauty for him to share,
The sweet delight of love, the deep
True solace found in prayer.

side of the Californian gulf, where the provinces of Cinaloa and Sonora are situated; but to my knowledge, navigation never has been practiced by the Indians of that coast, nor is it in use among them at the present time. There is, furthermore, within many leagues towards the interior of country, no kind of wood to be had suitable for the construction of even the smallest vessel. From the Pimeria, the northernmost country, opposite the peninsula, a transition which might have been easier by land, after crossing the Rio Colorado or by water, the sea being in this place very narrow and full of islands. In default of boats they could employ their balsas or little rafts made of weeds, which are also used by many Californians who live near the sea, either for catching fish or turtle, or crossing over to a certain island distant two leagues from the shore. I am, however, of opinion that, if these Pimerians ever had gone to California induced by curiosity, or had been driven to that coast by a storm, the dreary aspect of the country would soon have caused them to return without delay to their own country. It was doubtless necessity that gave the impulse to the peopling of the peninsula. Nearly all neighboring tribes of America, over whom the Europeans have no sway, are almost without cessation at war with each other, as long as one part is capable of resistance; but when the weaker is too much exhausted to carry on the feud, the vanquished usually leaves the country and settles in some other part at a sufficient distance from its foes. I am, therefore, inclined to believe that the first inhabitants while pursued by their enemies, entered the peninsula by land from the north side, and having found there a safe retreat, they remained and spread themselves out. If they had any traditions, some light might be thrown on this subject; but no Californian is acquainted with the events that occurred in the country prior to his birth, nor does he even know who his parents were if he should happen to have lost them during his infancy.⁹

(To be concluded)

NOTES

¹Alma 3:14.

²Mormon 8:2-7.

³Moroni 9:7-21.

⁴Mormon 8:8.

⁵Mormon 5:6; 6:8.

⁶Alma 2:11; 21:3; 30:59; 43:6; 46:28; Jac. 1:13.

⁷P. A. Means, *Ancient Civilizations*, New York, 1942, pp. 4 ff.; W. F. Sands "The Prehistoric Ruins of Guatemala" in *National Geographic Magazine*, Vol. 24, p. 325; A. H. Verrill, *Old Civilizations*, New York, 1929, etc.

⁸Published also in *Mithridates*, 1773.

⁹1864 Rep. Smithsonian Inst., p. 393; *An Account of the Aboriginal Inhabitants of the Californian Peninsula*, Translation of Jacob Baegert's *Nachrichten*, by Charles Rau, Parts 1 to 4, 1863 Report Smithsonian Institution, p. 352 ff.; Parts 5 to 10, 1864 Report Smithsonian Institution, p. 378 ff.

¹⁰Juan Maria Salvatierra, Madrid, 1757. English Translation of Margaret Wilbur, Cleveland, 1920, p. 37.

¹¹Vol. II, p. 50, English Translation of Herbert E. Bolton, University of California.

¹²Vol. I, p. 423.

¹³*Recueil de Voyages au Nord*, Vol. III, p. 279.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 392.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 212.

¹⁷*Antiqua Libreria Robredo*, Mexico, D.F. 1941.

¹⁸English Translation of Barbara Crowley, 1949.

¹⁹Bancroft *Native Races* I, p. 362.

²⁰*Resources of the Pacific Slope*, J. Ross Browne, 1869, pp. 53-54.

²¹Appleton & Co., New York, 1891. Vol. I, p. 283.

²²*National Geographic Magazine*, Vol. 36, pp. 307-330.