

Hagoth and the Polynesian Tradition

Jerry K. Loveland

In what amounts to an aside in the story of the Book of Mormon peoples, there is in the 63rd chapter of Alma a brief reference to a "curious man" named Hagoth.

And it came to pass that Hagoth, he being an exceedingly curious man, therefore he went forth and built him an exceedingly large ship, on the borders of the land Bountiful, by the land Desolation, and launched it into the west sea, by the narrow neck which led into the land northward.

And behold, there were many of the Nephites who did enter therein and did sail forth with much provisions, and also many women and children; and they took their course northward. And thus ended the thirty and seventh year.

And in the thirty and eighth year, this man built other ships. And the first ship did also return, and many more people did enter into it; and they also took much provisions, and set out again to the land northward.

And it came to pass that they were never heard of more. And we suppose that they were drowned in the depths of the sea. And it came to pass that one other ship also did sail forth; and whither she went we know not. (Alma 3:5-8)

What we have here, is an account of a colonizing movement of men, women, and children who went out in ships presumably into the Pacific Ocean sometime between 53 and 57 B.C. And they were never heard of again.

According to tacit Mormon belief, Hagoth sailed into the Pacific where he and his shipload (or shiploads) of people became at least part of the progenitors of the Polynesian people. The primary question we will deal with in this essay, then, is whether there is any evidence from Polynesia itself to support the Latter-day Saint contention that Hagoth and his people were among the ancestors of the present-day Polynesians.

The question of Polynesian origins has been debated for nearly

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200 years, but it has been only in the last generation that the greatest efforts have been made to determine the possibility of the entrance of cultural influences and people from the Americas into the Pacific.¹ Thor Heyerdahl has been the leading scholarly exponent of the theory that there were significant migrations of peoples from the Western Hemisphere into Polynesia.² In most scholarly circles now the argument is not whether there was American influence in the Pacific, but upon how it got there and how significant it was. As Roy Simmons notes:

There is no Polynesian [origins] problem, other than that created by ourselves, for it would seem that a handful of men and women from the east and west, and not racial groups as we know them today, produced the Polynesian people as a distinct entity among the races of Man.³

Most students of the subject think American influences were minimal, preferring to believe that the bulk of the peoples and culture originated to the west—the islands of Melanesia, western Polynesia (i.e., Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Rotuma, the Tokelaus, and the Wallis Islands) being settled before Eastern Polynesia (which includes the Hawaiian, Marquesas, Tuamotu and Society Islands, as well as New Zealand and Easter Island, which are the areas most likely to have been visited first by voyages from America).

Just when Polynesia came into being as a distinct cultural area has yet to be determined. Roger Green, one of the leading students in this field, has said that it is not until "about the 1st century B.C. that one is able to draw a distinct boundary between Polynesia and Melanesia. . . . At an earlier period this boundary simply did not exist, and Polynesia, as a cultural area, had yet to come into being."⁴

¹For a review of Polynesian origin theories see: Alan Howard, "Polynesian Origins and Migrations: A Review of Two Centuries of Speculation and Theory," in *Polynesian Culture History: Essays Presented in Honor of Kenneth P. Emory*, ed. Genevieve Highland et al. (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1967); Edwin N. Ferdon, Jr., "Polynesian Origins," *Science* 141 (9 August 1963):499-505; Donald Stanley Marshall, "The Settlement of Polynesia," *Scientific American* 195 (August 1959):59-72.

²See Thor Heyerdahl, *American Indians in the Pacific* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1952), and Thor Heyerdahl, *Sea Routes to Polynesia* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1968).

³Roy T. Simmons, "The Blood Group Genetics of Easter Islanders (Pascuenses) and Other Polynesians," in *Reports of the Norwegian Archaeological Expedition to Easter Island and the East Pacific*, Monographs of the School of American Research and the Kon-Tiki Museum, no. 24, pt. 2, ed. Thor Heyerdahl and Edwin N. Ferdon, Jr. (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965), p. 343.

⁴Roger C. Green, "West Polynesian Prehistory," in *Prehistoric Culture in Oceania*, ed. I. Yawata and Y. H. Sinoto (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1968), pp. 106-07.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL EVIDENCES

Archaeologists, who have only in the last generation begun doing stratigraphic or subsurface work in the Pacific Islands, have established some Carbon-14 (C-14) dates for different island areas.⁵ The earliest of these are:

Fiji	1,290 B.C. ⁶
Tonga	820± 100 B.C. ⁷
Samoa	200 B.C. ⁸
The Marquesas	150 B.C. ⁹
Easter Island	A.D. 400 [A date which has been challenged.] ¹⁰
Society Islands	[A burial site on Maupiti Island, A.D. 860 (1090± 85 B.P.)]. ¹¹
New Zealand	A.D. 1,000 ¹²

Hawaiian radiocarbon dates have been notoriously unstable.¹³ The most ancient C-14 date for Hawaii, however, is from a Molokai site and is about A.D. 600.¹⁴

The earliest settlement in Eastern Polynesia, therefore, appears to have been in the Marquesas Islands. Interestingly enough, the Marquesas and Tuamotu Islands are the areas most easily reached from the South American coast by navigators dependent upon winds and currents.¹⁵

⁵Richard Shutler, Jr., "Pacific Island Radio-Carbon Dates: An Overview," in *Studies in Oceanic Culture History*, ed. R. C. Green and Marion Kelly, Pacific Anthropological Records, vol. 2, no. 12 (Honolulu: Department of Anthropology, Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1971).

⁶Ibid., p. 18.

⁷Ibid., p. 20.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 21.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid. These dates can only be approximate, of course, but they are all that are available at this point.

¹³There are several major problems in utilizing radiocarbon dating in the South Pacific. These problems are significant enough to leave open to question the reliability of many of these dates. See Shutler, "Pacific Island Radio-Carbon Dates," 2:23-27.

¹⁴Patrick Vinton Kirch, "Halawa Dune Site (Hawaiian Islands): A Preliminary Report," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 80 (June 1971):228-36.

¹⁵V. I. Boitov and D. D. Tumarkin, "Navigational Conditions of Sea Routes to Polynesia," in *Archaeology at the 11th Pacific Science Congress, Papers Presented at the XI Pacific Science Congress*, Tokyo, August-September 1966, ed. Wilhelm Solheim, University of Hawaii, Asian and Pacific Archaeology Series, vol. 1 (Honolulu: Social Research Institute, 1966), pp. 88-100; Edward P. Lanning, "South America as a Source for Aspects of Oceanic Culture," in *Studies in Oceanic Culture History*, ed. R. C. Green and Marion Kelly, Pacific Anthropological Records, vol. 1, no. 11 (Honolulu: Department of Anthropology, Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1970), pp. 175-82.

But archaeological investigation is just beginning in Polynesia, and other than the C-14 data which supports the possibility of early settlement from the West, no archaeological evidence has yet been found which specifically substantiates the Hagoth story. Because of the warm, humid, tropical climate of most of the area, anything but bone, shell, or stone disintegrates quickly, and it is unlikely that many artifacts will be found.

Cultural similarities between Polynesian practices and any customs and traditions Book of Mormon people might have brought into the Pacific are also virtually impossible to trace. We do not know enough about the culture of the people of Hagoth nor of the earliest Polynesians to make any comparisons or to cite any parallels.

THE EVIDENCE OF TRADITION

It would seem, then, that if there is any evidence of Book of Mormon people entering the South Pacific, it must come from the oral traditions, histories, and genealogies of the Polynesians until such archaeological evidence as there may be comes to the fore. What we know today of ancient Polynesian traditions is what was recorded by literate aliens at the very time that Polynesian culture was undergoing radical moral, intellectual, and social change. Between 1775 and 1800 when these traditions were being written down, any Hagoth-carried traditions would have been about 1,850 years old. How reliable oral accounts could be expected to be after that long a period of time of being transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth is a serious question. If the oral traditions had been common property, they might have been preserved more accurately. But they were kept by the genealogists and the keepers of traditions—the *tohungas*—who were often closemouthed about what they knew, either because they considered the knowledge too sacred to share, or because some types of information, genealogies in particular, were sometimes politically sensitive and needed to be safely guarded. In this connection, it should be noted that some genealogists were not above faking genealogies to suit the political purposes of their chiefs, as Sir Peter Buck notes:

The longer genealogies have been studied by European scholars, whose faith in these feats of memory has led them to overlook certain flaws which exist in the alleged human sequences. In some, the names of various lands at which the ancestors sojourned have been included, perhaps accidentally, as human beings. Various qualifying terms, as long, short, large, small, have been added in a se-

quence to the same name, but each is treated as a generation. The method is a convenient technique for lengthening a lineage. In others again, personifications of natural phenomena that belong to a mythical period have been interpolated into the human succession. Individuals have falsified records in order to give prestige to families newly risen to power or to hide the bar sinister that somehow cannot be avoided in long descent. The Hawaiian historian, David Malo, truly said that the expert genealogist was the wash-bowl of the high chief.¹⁶

Much of the Polynesian culture and tradition was gone within a generation after the coming of the Europeans. A good deal of history undoubtedly went into the graves with the sages who had known it, and often less well-informed individuals were left to repeat the traditions of their fathers to those literate aliens who came asking for their history. As we look to the recording of the oral traditions, we must also note the frequent disposition of Polynesian informants to distort their traditions to give them more standing with the European foreigners, of which more will be said later.

Among the collection of traditional evidence from Polynesia which we have today, we will look at two categories which might suggest a contact between Hagoth's adventurers and the peoples of the Eastern Pacific. These are the parallels between Old Testament stories and Polynesian traditions, and the tradition of migration accounts.

PARALLELS BETWEEN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

Some students of Polynesian-American Indian relationships point out certain parallels in their respective religious traditions as proof of their common ancestry. Such parallels do exist and they are significant. But there are some problems for those anxious to assume a common source. There is a profusion of religious parallels between Polynesian religious beliefs and practices and practically every other major religion of the world, both ancient and modern. Critics have claimed there are elements of medieval Christianity, Greek and Roman mythology, ancient Indian Vedic Brahmanic beliefs, Hindu traditions, and Chinese Buddhism and Chinese folk religion in Polynesian religion, as well as traits from Southeast Asia, Indonesia, Melanesia and the Americas.¹⁷ This is not necessarily to suggest that the Polynesians actually borrowed from these

¹⁶Sir Peter Buck, *Vikings of the Sunrise* (Christchurch, New Zealand: Whitcombe and Tombs Ltd., 1958), p. 25.

¹⁷E. S. Craighill Handy, *Polynesian Religion*, Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin 34 (Honolulu, 1927), p. 30.

various sources. Polynesian religious practices may have been invented independently of any other source as a means of answering questions fundamental to all human beings, or they may have diffused from an original source. One cannot say for certain.

Then, too, there are differences in Polynesian religion from area to area and even within a given island group. For example, there are many traditions about how man came to be created: man was created in his creator's image (Hawaii); the wind impregnated the earth and a girl was born (Ontong Java); a woman and a clam mated and man came into being (Rapa); man came from eggs (Marquesas); man came from dirt which was mixed with his creator's blood (New Zealand); man was begotten in a union between a plant and some red clay (also New Zealand); man descended from maggots on a rotting vine (Samoa and Tonga); man was first born from a *ti* plant (Niue); or from a rock (Tonga, Pukapuka, Samoa, the Tokelaus); or even from a blood clot (Chatham Islands).

But parallels between Old Testament and Polynesian traditions have been recorded. In fact, the similarities are sometimes so close that the initial recorders of them refused to believe they were authentically Polynesian. A good example of this comes from Tahiti where the missionary-scholar William Ellis arrived in 1816, fifty years after its discovery by European explorers, but only a couple of years after the first converts to Christianity were made. Ellis wrote this interesting account:

A very generally received Tahitian tradition is, that the first human pair was made by Taaroa, the principal deity acknowledged by the Tahitian nation. On more than one occasion, I have listened to the details of the people respecting his work of creation. They say, that after Taaroa had formed the world, he created man out of *ararea*, red earth . . . some relate that Taaroa one day called for the man by name. When he came, he caused him to fall asleep, and that while he slept, he took out one of his *ivi* or bones, and with it made a woman, whom he gave to the man as his wife, and they became the progenitors of mankind.¹⁸

But Ellis discounted the authenticity of the tradition:

This always appeared to me to be a mere recital of the Mosaic account of creation, which they had heard from some European, and I never placed any reliance on it, although they have repeatedly told me it was a tradition among them before any foreigner arrived. Some have also stated that the woman's name was Ivi, which would

¹⁸William Ellis, *Polynesian Researches. Polynesia* (1831; reprint ed., Rutland, Vt. and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1969), p. 110.

be by them pronounced as if written *Eve*. Ivi is an aboriginal word, and not only signifies a bone, but also a widow, and a victim slain in war.¹⁹

Eve, of course, is an English word derived via several languages from the Hebrew *Hawwah*.

Sheldon Dibble, a Congregational missionary who arrived in Hawaii in 1831, was less skeptical than Ellis. Noting the same resemblance between Hawaiian traditions and biblical accounts, he said that the Hawaiian oral traditions

. . . were told to the missionaries before the Bible was translated into the Hawaiian tongue, and before the people knew much of sacred history. The native who acted as assistant in translating the history of Joseph was forcibly struck with its similarity to their ancient tradition. Neither is there the least room for supposing that the songs referred to are recent inventions. They can all be traced back for generations, and are known by various persons residing on different islands who have had no communications with each other. Some of them have their dates in the reign of some ancient king, and others have existed time out of mind. It may also be added, that both their narrations and songs are known the best by the very oldest of people, and those who never learned to read; whose education and training were under the ancient system of heathenism.²⁰

The story of Joseph is comparable to the story of Waikelenuaiku, one of ten brothers and one daughter, the children of Waiku. Waikelenuaiku was the favorite of his father, but was despised by his brothers, who threw him into a pit. The oldest brother drew him out of the pit and gave him to another man with instructions to care for him. Waikelenuaiku fled to a country governed by a king named Kamahoalii, where he was again imprisoned. While in this prison Waikelenuaiku told his prison companions to dream dreams and report them to him. Four of the prisoners dreamed dreams which Waikelenuaiku interpreted. He told the dreamers of the first three dreams that they would die; to the fourth dreamer he promised deliverance and life. The dreams were fulfilled as Waikelenuaiku had foretold. The fourth dreamer told the king of Waikelenuaiku's power to interpret dreams. The king sent for him and made him chief in his kingdom.²¹

While it is not in the scope of this essay to list and comment on all of the apparent parallels between Polynesian and Old Testament

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Sheldon Dibble, *A History of the Sandwich Islands* (Honolulu: Thomas G. Thrum, 1909), p. 18.

²¹Ibid., p. 17. Dibble collected these and other traditions during the 1830s.

traditions, we may list several: a creation account that resembles the Genesis story; a story of a worldwide deluge; a story of the creation of woman from the first man's body; an account of a war in the heavens; a paradise lost; a forbidden fruit; a confusion of tongues; and the Joshua-like stopping of the sun for a period of time. There are also Adam- and Eve-like figures and Noah-like characters along with others who resemble the biblical patriarchs. In Hawaiian tradition there is a story in the Jonah tradition of a man who is swallowed by a large fish and later cast upon the shore. There is also a story of Kanaloa and Kane-Apua, which resembles the Moses and Aaron relationship.²²

But these stories are not without disbelievers. While John White, a collector of Maori traditions, referred to a deluge tradition among the Maoris, Elsdon Best, who was the most prolific producer of materials on the Maoris, and is a generation later than White, disputes that tradition. It was, he says, most likely infected with Christian teachings.²³ Anticipating such a criticism of some of his recordings of Hawaiian traditions, Kepelino, after describing a tree of life and death on the road to the underworld, says:

This is not a variant of a sacred (Biblical) story, this is a real Hawaiian legend. It is not a version taken from the stories of the

²²This is a partial listing of sources of Polynesian traditions which bear a striking similarity to Old Testament accounts:

Hawaiian Creation: Martha Beckwith, ed., *Kepelino's Traditions of Hawaii*, Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin 95 (Honolulu, 1932), pp. 14, 17, 24-34; Abraham Fornander, *Fornander Collection of Hawaiian Antiquities and Folk-Lore*, Memoirs of the Bernice P. Bishop Museum, vol. 6 (Honolulu, 1919-20), pp. 267-68, 335, hereafter cited as *Fornander Collection*; Kamakau and Westervelt, as cited in Martha Beckwith, *Hawaiian Mythology* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1970), pp. 45-46.

Hawaiian War in Heaven: Abraham Fornander, *An Account of the Polynesian Race: Its Origins and Migrations*, 2 vols. (1878; reprint ed., Rutland, Vt. and Toyko: Charles E. Tuttle, 1969), 1:83; Beckwith, *Kepelino's Traditions*, pp. 48, 50, 54.

Tuamotuan War in Heaven: Teuira Henry, *Ancient Tahiti*, Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin 48 (Honolulu, 1928), p. 349.

Forbidden Fruit and a Paradise Lost: *Fornander Collection*, pp. 273-76; Beckwith, *Kepelino's Traditions*, pp. 32-34.

Deluge Traditions: Society Islands - Henry, *Ancient Tahiti*, pp. 448-52, and Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, pp. 386-93; New Zealand - John White, *The Ancient History of the Maori*, 4 vols. (Wellington, New Zealand: George Disbury, Government Printer, 1887), 1:172-81; Hawaii - Beckwith, *Kepelino's Traditions*, pp. 35-38, and Fornander, *Polynesian Race*, 1:91-96; The Marquesas Islands - E. S. Craighill Handy, *Marquesan Legends*, Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin 69 (Honolulu, 1930), pp. 109-10; Fiji - Lorimer Fison, *Tales from Old Fiji* (London: A. Moring, 1904), pp. 30-31, and A. M. Hocart, *Lau Islands, Fiji*, Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin 62 (Honolulu, 1929), p. 201.

Moses- and Aaron-like Figures: Beckwith, *Kepelino's Traditions*, pp. 68-70.

²³Elsdon Best, *The Maori*, 2 vols. (Wellington, New Zealand: Harry H. Tombs, 1924), 1:149-51.

Holy Bible. It is a strange thing taught by the Spirit. Perhaps the Hawaiians were mistaken. Perhaps a tree is not the roadway down into *Po* [the underworld]. Perhaps these were words handed down from our first ancestors, but lost because of the length of time gone by.²⁴

David Malo, a native Hawaiian scholar of the early nineteenth century, described a deluge in Hawaii sent by a personage named Kahina-lii.²⁵ Malo concludes his story with these words:

This is the story of the deluge which has been handed down by tradition from the ancients. Traditions are not as reliable as genealogies. Genealogies can be trusted to some extent. The ancients were misinformed. This we know because we have heard the story of Noah, and this does not tally with our tradition of the Kai-a-ka-hina-lii. For this reason this tradition of the Kai-a-ka-hina-lii cannot be of Hawaiian origin. It was heard by the ancients and finally came to be accepted by them as belonging to Hawaii nei.²⁶

Will Mariner recorded a Cain- and Abel-like story from Tonga which he learned when he was there in the early 1800s, just after the Christian missionaries came in 1797. In his account Toobo was elder brother to Vaca-acow-ooli. The older brother, becoming envious of the younger brother, who was wise and hardworking, killed him. The father of the two young men, Tangaloa, the chief Tongan God, found out about this and sent the families of both brothers away. Addressing the family of Vaca-acow-ooli, the murdered brother, Tangaloa said:

Put your canoes to sea, and sail to the east, to the great land which is there, and take up your abode there. Be your skins white like your minds, for your minds are pure; you shall be wise, making axes, and all riches whatsoever, and shall have large canoes. I will go myself and command the wind to blow from your land to Tonga; but they (the Tonga people) shall not be able to go with you with their bad canoes.

Tangaloa then spoke to the others:—You shall be black, because your minds are bad, and shall be destitute; you shall not be wise in useful things, neither shall you go to the great land of your brothers. How can you go with your bad canoes? But your brothers shall come to Tonga, and trade with you as they please.²⁷

John Martin, Mariner's compiler, says of this story:

Mr. Mariner took particular pains to make inquiries respecting

²⁴Beckwith, *Kepelino's Traditions*, p. 52.

²⁵David Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, Bernice P. Bishop Museum Special Publications, no. 2 (Honolulu, 1951), pp. 234-37.

²⁶Ibid., p. 237.

²⁷Will Mariner, *An Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands . . . Compiled from the Communications of W. Mariner by John Martin*, 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1827), 2:112-13.

the above extraordinary story, with a view to discover whether it was only a corrupted relation of the Mosaic account; and he found that it was not universally known to the Tonga people. Most of the chiefs and matabooles [lesser chiefs, often learned men] were acquainted with it, but the bulk of the people seemed totally ignorant of it. This led him at first to suspect that the chiefs had obtained the leading facts from some of our modern missionaries, and had interwoven it with their own notions; but the oldest men affirmed their positive belief that it was an ancient traditional record, and that it was founded in truth.²⁸

Martin goes on to say that Mariner then told them of the Cain and Abel story in the Bible and told them he believed their account had come from some European who had been among them at an earlier period. (Tonga was first discovered by Europeans in 1616, though European visits were few and far between before the early nineteenth century.) But, he says:

. . . some still persisted that it was an original tradition of their own, whilst owned there was so great a similarity between the two accounts, that they were disposed to believe they had received theirs from us, perhaps two or three or four generations back.²⁹

A strong attack on the authenticity of Hawaiian legends and traditions with Old Testament overtones has been made in connection with the Kumuhonua legends, describing the creation of the earth and of Hawaii and of the origins of the Hawaiians, which were published by Abraham Fornander in 1878, in *An Account of the Polynesian Race*. The Kumuhonua account was published again from Fornander's notes in 1919-1920 as *Hawaiian Antiquities and Folk-Lore*. In the later volume he noted that his account was compiled from Kepelino and S. M. Kamakau,³⁰ contemporary scholars of Hawaiian customs and history, and acknowledged his debt to them for furnishing him with "some valuable chants, and the groundwork of the Kumuhonua legends, most of which was confirmed by the late Mr. Kamakau."³¹

Recently, Dorothy Barrere has argued that the Kumuhonua legends were "fabrications of the latter nineteenth century, and not traditions of pre-Christian days,"³² claiming that Kamakau and Kepelino deliberately distorted the Kumuhonua account, adding to

²⁸Ibid., p. 113.

²⁹Ibid., p. 114.

³⁰Fornander Collection, p. 266.

³¹Fornander, *Polynesian Race*, 1:vi.

³²Dorothy Barerre, *The Kumuhonua Legends: A Study of Late Nineteenth Century Hawaiian Stories of Creation and Origins*, Pacific Anthropological Records Number 3 (Honolulu: Department of Anthropology, Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1969), p. 1.

an ancient authentic tradition certain concepts compatible with their own ardent Christianity. They were, she says, part of "an on-going attempt among some Hawaiians of that time to introduce 'traditions' compatible with Christian teachings."³³ Add to this the capacity of the Polynesians to adapt themselves and their culture very quickly to new influences and the problem of determining the exact tradition is compounded. A statement from Alfred Metraux in his study of Easter Island illustrates this latter problem:

The natives who are still acquainted with their folk literature have no scruples about introducing new details gained from visitors with whom they have discussed their islands' past. Lavachery and I gave our Easter Island friends an account of their ancestors' behavior towards the first voyagers who landed on the island. I was greatly surprised to find later that details the Easter Islanders had learned from us or from other travellers had slipped into the modern versions of these tales.³⁴

In summary, we must conclude that while there are charges that many of the later striking parallels between the Old Testament and the Polynesian oral tradition result from mere fabrications, there are some other interesting traditions in prehistoric Polynesian culture which bear striking resemblances to the Old Testament chronicle. The similarities are so close as to suggest the Polynesians' ancestors brought these oral accounts with them into Polynesia. At the same time, we must be aware of the influence of time, error, and distortion which have either deleted from or added to the oral record.

MIGRATION ACCOUNTS

We might also expect to find accounts in Polynesian traditions dealing with migrations of Polynesian peoples from other places. Such a tradition is fairly well stated in Maori oral history which has the early Maoris leaving a homeland, *Hawaiiki*, and sailing for New Zealand. The term *Hawaii*, or its variations, turns up in several places in Polynesia: *Hawaii* in the present-day Hawaii, and *Savaii* in Samoa. The ancient name for Raiatea in French Polynesia was, according to some, *Havaii*. The name also shows up in one Marquesan story in which the people of Hivaoa sailed to Havaii and back in a bamboo raft which had five levels, two below the water and three above.³⁵

³³Ibid., p. 2.

³⁴Alfred Metraux, *Easter Island* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 229.

³⁵Handy, *Marquesan Legends*, p. 137.

There are, then, traditions of the movement of people from place to place—hardly surprising considering the island character of Polynesia. Migration accounts are more frequently found in Eastern Polynesia than in Western Polynesia, where autochthonous theories are the rule. Our question here, though, is whether we can find any tradition that suggests an affinity with the Hagoth account in the Book of Mormon, any event that occurred 1600 years before the first Europeans entered the Pacific to note and record any Polynesian traditions. The answer here is yes, but. . . . In 1920, Handy recorded a Marquesan tradition of a great double canoe, the *Kaahua*, which sailed from Hivaoa east to Tafiti. (The Polynesian word *Tafiti* or *Tahiti* designates a foreign place.) Some explorers left the vessel there while others returned. Handy's informant insisted that the voyage was in the direction of the rising sun, that is, toward South America, not southwest toward the island of Tahiti.³⁶

The most striking Polynesian account of a Hagoth-like voyage is that of Hawaii Loa, or Hawaii-nui. (He is called Hawaii Loa or Ke Kowa i Hawaii in the Fornander story and Hawaii-nui in the Kepelino version.) Mormon tradition has it that Hawaii Loa and Hagoth are the same person, and LDS temple records show them as being the same. The Hawaii Loa story is a part of the Kumuhonua legends referred to above. A portion of Fornander's account (which he got from Samuel Kamakau and Kepelino) follows:

Hawaii Loa, or Ke Kowa i Hawaii. He was one of the four children of Ainani ka Lani. . . . Hawaii Loa and his brothers were born on the east coast of a country called Ka Aina kai Melemele a Kane (the land of the yellow or handsome sea). Hawaii Loa was a distinguished man and noted for his fishing excursions which would occupy sometimes months, sometimes the whole year, during which time he would roam about the ocean in his big vessel (*waa*), called also a ship (*he moku*), with his people, his crew and his officers and navigators. . . .

One time when they had thus been long out on the ocean, Makalii, the principal navigator, said to Hawaii Loa: "Let us steer the vessel in the direction of Iao, the Eastern Star, the discoverer of land. . . . There is land to the eastward, and here is a red star '*hoku ula*' (Aldebaran) to guide us, and the land is there in the direction of those big stars which resemble a bird. . . .

So they steered straight onward and arrived at the easternmost island. . . . They went ashore and found the country fertile and pleasant, filled with awa, coconut trees, etc., and Hawaii Loa, the

³⁶Ibid., p. 131.

chief, called that land after his own name. Here they dwelt a long time and when their vessel was filled with food and with fish, they returned to their native country with the firm intention to come back to Hawaii-nei [i.e., here in Hawaii] which they preferred to their own country. They had left their wives and children at home; therefore they returned to fetch them.

And when they arrived at their own country and among their relations, they were detained a long time before they set out again for Hawaii.

At last Hawaii Loa started again, accompanied by his wife and children and dwelt in Hawaii and gave up all thought of ever returning to his native land. He was accompanied also in this voyage by a great multitude of people . . . steersmen, navigators, shipbuilders and this and that sort of people. Hawaii Loa was chief of all this people, and he alone brought his wife and children. All the others came singly without women. Hence Hawaii Loa is called the special progenitor of this nation.³⁷

The rest of the story of Hawaii Loa tells of his further travels to Tahiti (where he had a brother), and to other islands. The island of Maui was named after his eldest son and Oahu after his eldest daughter. Kauai was named after his younger son. On one of Hawaii Loa's journeys westward he landed on the eastern coast of Lahui-maka-lilio "the people with the turned up eyes oblique. He traveled over it to the northward and to the westward to the land of Kuahewahewa-a-Kane . . . and thence he returned . . . to Hawaii nei, bringing with him some white men . . . and married them to native women. . . ."³⁸

The descendants of Hawaii Loa were also travellers, and according to the Fornander account, they settled the rest of Polynesia and Fiji.

The descendants of Hawaii Loa and also of Ki (which are one, for they were brothers) peopled nearly all the Polynesian islands. From Ki came the Tahiti, Borabora, Huahine, Tahaa, Raiatea and Moorea (people). [All in French Polynesia.]

From Kanaloa were peopled Nukuhiwa, Uapou, Tahuata, Hiwaoa and these other islands. [These are in the Marquesas group.] Kanaloa married a woman from the man-eating people, Taehoae [a valley in the Marquesas on Nuuhiwa], Fiji, Tarapara, Paumotu, and the islands in western Polynesia. . . .³⁹

Kepelino's account is similar to the one published by Fornander, but briefer.⁴⁰

³⁷*Fornander Collection*, p. 278.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 280.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 281.

⁴⁰Beckwith, *Kepelino's Traditions*, pp. 76-78.

The Hawaii Loa story is certainly suggestive of the Hagoth reference in the Book of Alma, but its authenticity has fallen under suspicion because it is part of the "discredited" portion of the Kumuhonua story published by Fornander from the notes he took from Kepelino and Kamakau. The most serious difficulty, however, is the fact that no other Hawaiian tradition or legend refers to the Hawaii Loa account.⁴¹ Barrere accuses Kepelino and Kamakau of creating the Hawaii Loa legend, saying:

In the Hawaii Loa legend(s) Fornander's informants departed from Biblically-inspired tales and entered the realm of pure invention in their attempts to account for the peopling of the Hawaiian islands. Kepelino's story as written in 1868 is a plausibly told legend, but the embellishments and "biographical" material found in Fornander's notes . . . reveal the extent of the invention. They also disclose a knowledge of Pacific geography and of an ethnic relationship among Polynesian peoples that were unknown to the Hawaiians before western contact, and so could hardly have been incorporated in an authentic tradition.⁴²

One possible explanation would be that Kepelino and Kamakau had read the Hagoth reference in the Book of Mormon and postulated the Hawaii Loa legend from it. Mormonism was established in Hawaii and the Book of Mormon was available by the time the alleged fabrication of Kamakau and Kepelino took place. But there is no evidence that they borrowed from Mormon sources or even knew about Mormonism. Kepelino was a devout Catholic, as a matter of fact, which makes less plausible the claim that he would pick up an idea from the Book of Mormon on which to base a story of the origins of his ancestors.

Barrere says that for Kepelino "the problem of accounting for the peopling of Hawaii had been a topic of discussion among those who wished to replace the older mythological traditions with a more 'modern' and credible account."⁴³ Kepelino's and Kamakau's motives are so impugned by Barrere, who accuses them of intellectual dishonesty and outright fabrication. Her supposition that the geographical details in the Hawaii Loa story could not have been known to the prehistoric Hawaiians is a telling criticism. This explanation is not entirely satisfactory, however, because it is supported primarily by the unprovable inference that Kamakau and Kepelino were so desperate to have an account of the peopling of Hawaii that they invented a migration myth.

⁴¹Barerre, *The Kumuhonua Legends*, p. 38.

⁴²Ibid., p. 37.

⁴³Ibid.

Cartwright suggests that we not throw the baby out with the bathwater. He accepts the proposition that Kamakau and Kepe-lino doctored up the Kumukonua account with biblical tales, but he believes that Hawaii Loa was still a real character who figured prominently in Hawaiian history.⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

This study has been an effort to determine whether any evidence from Polynesian oral tradition supports Mormon interpretations of the account of Hagoth given in the Book of Mormon that a colonizing expedition left the west coast of South or Central America and found its way into the Pacific, the people in it becoming part of the Polynesian cultural heritage. We have accepted the theory that people from the Americas did become part of that heritage. We have not, however, found irrefutable evidence in the histories and/or genealogies of the Polynesians to suggest that they had a tradition of Hagoth's voyages. The biblical parallels and the Hawaii Loa account certainly suggest a remote ancestry with the Book of Mormon people, but we have seen that they are somewhat suspect. It seems unlikely that we shall be able to learn anything more from Polynesian traditions because the old wise men, the learned *tobungas*, the chanters of the genealogies, are long in their graves, and present-day traditions, although purporting to be of ancient things, are generally considered unreliable by the critics.

If the Hagoth account is to be verified scientifically, it must come from other means. Stratigraphic archaeology and other more sophisticated scientific techniques have only just begun to be applied to Polynesia. The great age of Polynesian discovery may lie just ahead of us—and here tradition may become a guide for the investigator.

⁴⁴Bruce Cartwright, "The Legend of Hawaii-loa," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 38 (1939):105-119.