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## People of Mulek Geography

Author(s): Jerry D. Grover, Jr.

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# Chapter 17

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The people of Mulek coexisted chronologically for a period of time with the late Jaredites, and they were the earliest heirs to the Jaredites' abandoned lands. Some portion of Jaredite geography became some portion of Mulekite geography. Etymological analysis and a close reading of the narratives about the people of Mulek will help us place the action of these narratives in the former Jaredite lands.

There are few geographic details given in the story of the people of Mulek. The location of the first arrival of Mulek and his founding group was in the land northward (Helaman 6:10), with the place of their first landing being in the land of Desolation. It is not indicated exactly when the Mulek group arrived, but because Mulek was a child of Zedekiah contemporaneous with the Lehi group and he arrived in the New World in person, a reasonable date of arrival would be no later than 560 BC.

Since the founding group arrived in the land of Desolation in 560 BC and the Jaredite demise was not until much later, contact between Mulek's people and the Olmec is a given. The Caractors Document does include the name *Mulek* and the section of the publication (Grover 2015) discussing its Mesoamerican relationship is included here.

### Mulek/Muloch

There is a bit of discrepancy in the earlier versions of the Book of Mormon and the Printer's Manuscript as to the spelling of Mulek or whether there may be two individuals referenced (Book of Mormon Onomasticon 2015). I would suspect, based on Royal Skousen's analysis referenced in the Onomasticon, that the proper spelling is Muloch, but that does not bear any relevance to the translation of the name Mulek from the Caractors document. The names determined so far do not appear to have a phonetic element in the document but are written in Egyptian according to their etymological meanings, not from a transliteration. The Onomasticon provided a likely etymology for Mulek:

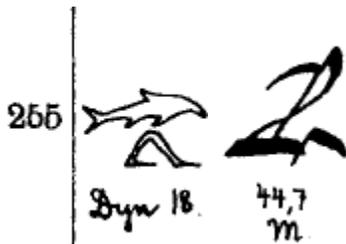
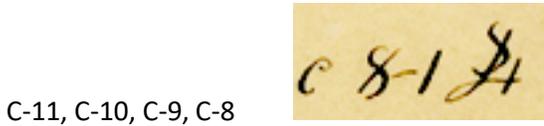
It is very tempting to read MULEK as a shortened form, perhaps a hypocoristicon, of a longer name. For example, from the same time period, the days of ZEDEKIAH, the name Malchiah in Jeremiah 38:6, reads in Hebrew *malkiyahû* and means "Yahweh is (my) king." It has been proposed by some scholars that Malchiah may have been the son of ZEDEKIAH, which, if it is correct, has been obscured by the King James translation. That is, the Hebrew, *malkiyahû ben hammelek*, can be translated most readily, as the Septuagint does, as "Malchiah the son of the king," rather than the King James rendering, "Malchiah the son of Hammlech." Because of the suggested identity of Malchiah as a son of ZEDEKIAH, LDS scholars have also suggested a connection between Book of Mormon MULEK and biblical Malchiah.

The form MULEK, if it is a hypocoristicon of a name similar to Malchiah, would be from the noun pattern for a diminutive or caritative, *pu'ail* (*fu'ayl* in Arabic), meaning "little king." The diphthong *-ai-* can shorten to */e/*. Given that MULEK was the son of King ZEDEKIAH (see Helaman 8:21), then a Personal Name based on a diminutive of the Semitic root *mlk* would seem appropriate.

The following characters have been translated as "Mulek." The basis for some of the character definitions in the translation of Mulek is from Crowley's research (Crowley 1961). Crowley found a few definitions for some of these individual characters; he did not propose that they meant anything as a unit.

The definitions that are relevant to Mulek (including a few found by Crowley) are as follows: C-8 is the hieratic sign for “walking fish”; C-9 is the Egyptian word *rn* meaning “to be young” (Brugsch 1868); C-10 is the Egyptian word *hwtj*, which is a determinative “male” adjective (*hwt* is also known to mean “male” in the Chicago Demotic Dictionary [CDD H (09:1) page 75]); and C-11 is *hry*, which in Egyptian means “lord,” “master,” or “chief” (Chicago Demotic Dictionary 2014, CDD H [09:1] page 219).

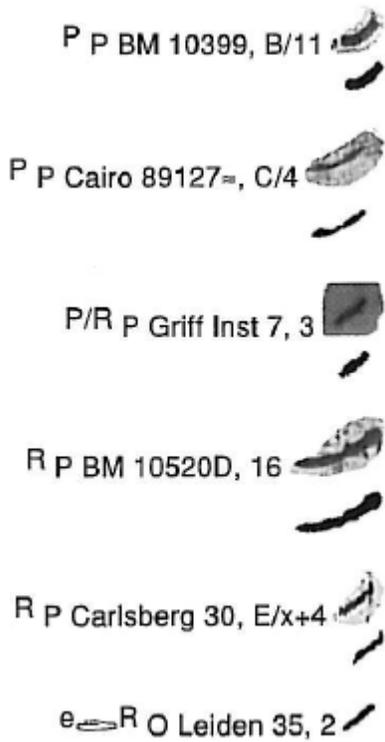
It is a fairly straight translation that “young male chief” would be equivalent to “little king,” which would translate as Mulek (according to the Onomasticon), who would have been the first king of the Mulekites. “Walking fish” in the context of the Mayan language is a perfect match for Mulek as explained below. Each associated Egyptian glyph is shown below:



Möller Number 255, Harris Papyri H. M. (Möller 1965, Bd II 1-30, 249–257)

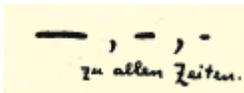


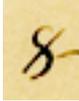
Example of *r*



(Chicago Demotic Dictionary 2014, CDD R [01.1] page 1)

Example of *n* from the Erichsen's Glossar Demotisches (Erichsen 1954)



C-10 

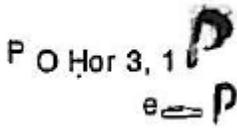
Example of *hwt*



Ptolemaic hieratic (Erichsen 1954, 297)

C-11 

Example of *hry*



Ptolemaic Ostrakon, cited from CDD H (09:1) page 219 (Chicago Demotic Dictionary 2014)

It should also be noted that the fish portion of the Möller Number 255 glyph is included by Gardiner as the hieroglyph Number K-3, and that it is the initial phonetic element in the word for “administrator of a province” and “excavator of canal(s),” *‘d-mr* (Gardiner 1957, 477). Mulek was never identified as a king.

### Something Fishy about Mulek

As noted above, the Egyptian hieratic glyphs closely matching part of Mulek’s name are the signs for Fish (Gardiner Number K-3) and Walking Legs (Gardiner Number D-55). In Egyptian, certain verbs involving the notion of movement add the Walking Legs ideogram. The Walking Legs ideogram can also indicate backwards movement when oriented as in the Caractors glyph. It could have been interpreted as “Moving Fish,” but normally a designation for fish does not include an addition for movement, as a fish is presumed to be able to move by swimming.

The Maya PDI and ADI glyphs almost always feature the glyph called in the Maya “Muloc,” which depicts a fish, or “Xoc,” which is a shark.



ADI and PDI glyphs, including the Muluc fish glyph and the PDI Xoc shark glyph (A and B, Stuart 1990, 217; C - Pal. Inscr. (W), S5; D – Cop. Tl1, E door, S panel, C5 (Thompson 1950 Figure 30)

Famous Mayanist David H. Kelley (1960) noted a Hebrew connection to the Maya calendar involving three sequential Maya day names that corresponded with three sequential Hebrew letters. The day names are Manik, Lamed, and Muluc. The Manik glyph is of a hand and corresponds with the Yucatec Mayan word for hand, *kab*. The corresponding Hebrew letter is *kaph*. The next Hebrew letter in the Hebrew alphabet is *lamed*, or *l*, and the next Maya calendar day name is *Lamat*. The next Hebrew letter in sequence is *mem*, which means water, and the next sequential Maya calendar day name is *Muluc*, which features a fish as its glyph.

The symbol of a fish or a shark is well-known in the late Olmec (Epi-Olmec) culture area. Shark iconography is especially associated with the Gulf lowlands, most deriving from Veracruz and Tabasco (Arnold 2005). This is precisely the area that most Mesoamerican Book of Mormon models place the landing place and initial settlement of the Mulekites.

Notably, the shark or fish theme has been featured in the royal headdresses of the Gulf Lowland region of the Epi-Olmec. A shark headdress is featured on the La Mojarra Stela 1, which includes a large shark hanging from the rear

of the headdress, with four smaller sharks along its spine (see figure 79). The stela was pulled from the Acula River near La Mojarra, Veracruz, Mexico, not far from the Tres Zapotes archaeological site.

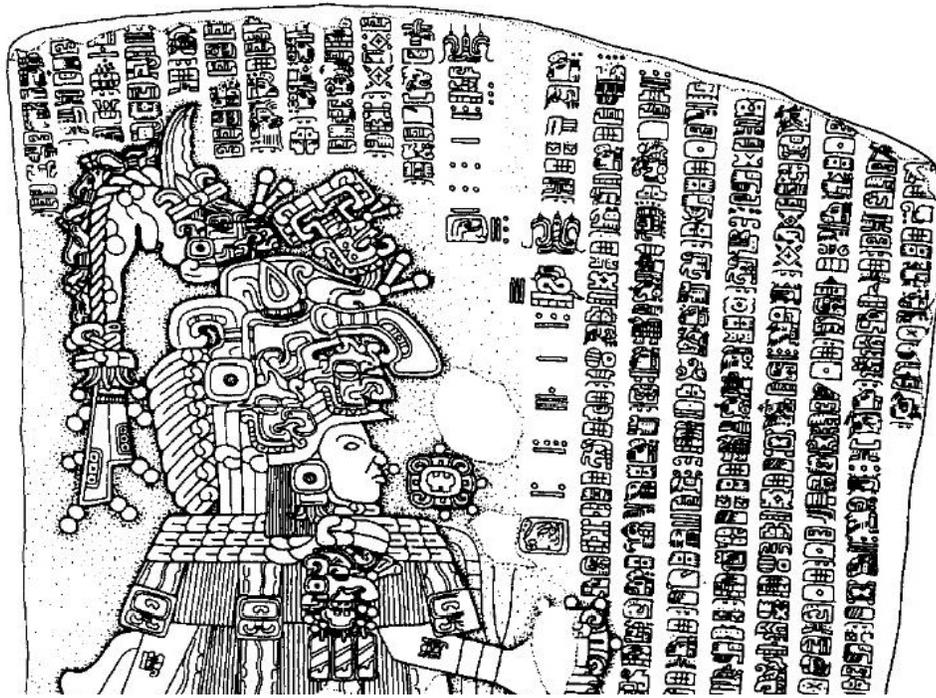


Figure 79. Shark headdress featured on the La Mojarra Stela 1, dating from 300 BC to the 2nd century AD. (Wikipedia Commons 2017b)

Other than the fish theme for the Maya glyph Muluc, a correlation with the Paleo-Hebrew letter (Grover 2015), and the association with the fish/shark theme in the area where the Mulekites would have been located, is there any further correspondence with the “Walking Fish” title for Mulek? John L. Sorenson (2013) has provided some convincing arguments that the bearded Semitic-looking individual with a large aquiline nose on La Venta Stela 3 is in fact Mulek and the scene depicts the arrival of Mulek (see figure 80) (539). One striking detail overlooked by Sorenson in Stela 3 is that the headdress that the individual identified as Mulek is wearing is in the form of a big fish. The designation in the Caractors Document as “Walking Fish,” as either part of his name or as a ceremonial title, is exactly consistent with the Maya glyph Muluc, the ADI featuring Muluc, and the La Venta Stela 3 featuring Mulek.



Figure 80. La Venta Stela 3. (Studyblue.org 2015)

The correspondence of La Venta with the geographical location of the people of Mulek is quite clear.

### People of Zarahemla Geography

It is not indicated how long the people of Mulek remained in the land that would later be called Desolation. Based on a reasonable lifespan for Mulek, the people of Zarahemla (as at least some of the descendants of Mulek came to be called) would still have been in the area that would be known as Desolation in 540 BC. Since “Mulek” historically correlates with fish, it can reasonably be presumed that the people of Mulek were established for some time in the lowland areas, likely in the vicinity of La Venta. It would seem likely that they were in the La Venta area a significant amount of time before the people of Mulek “came up” into the “south wilderness,” which was later called the land of Bountiful (Alma 22: 30–31). Perhaps they moved at the time of Jaredite conflict around 450–400 BC.

It needs to be noted that the people who originated with Mulek are referred to as the “people of Zarahemla” and are referred to that way collectively even back to the arrival in the New World, even though it is obvious that the individual Zarahemla encountered by Mosiah<sub>1</sub> and his party was not present for their history.

It is clear from later references in the Book of Mormon that the land of Zarahemla was completely separate from the land of Bountiful, so the people of Zarahemla had moved from what was previously the “south wilderness” (which was obviously not a wilderness anymore after long-term occupation by the descendants of Mulek) to a new area, which then became the land of Zarahemla after being settled sometime before 209 BC, when they were joined by Mosiah<sub>1</sub> and his people. One interpretation of Mosiah 25:2 seems to indicate that not all of the people who were ancestors of those who arrived with Mulek came up into the wilderness with the individual Zarahemla:

Now there were not so many of the children of Nephi, or so many of those who were descendants of Nephi, as there were of the people of Zarahemla, who was a descendant of Mulek, and those who came with him into the wilderness.

This might help explain why Zarahemla was not considered a king at the time of Mosiah<sub>1</sub>'s arrival, as there may have been another ruler in the old “south wilderness” area that they had just left. This interpretation would render the meaning that the move into the wilderness involved the individual Zarahemla and his fellow descendants of the original party of Mulek, along with another group of people described as “those who came with him,” “him” meaning Zarahemla. Based on this interpretation, the move of the specific group of people occupying the land of Zarahemla occurred not long before the arrival of Mosiah<sub>1</sub>, perhaps sometime around 250 BC.

This reading could also differentiate “the wilderness” where Zarahemla moved to (which became the land of Zarahemla) from the “south wilderness” where the early people of Mulek occupied, as the “south wilderness” correlates with a portion of the land of Bountiful and the ancient Jaredite wilderness in the land southward adjacent to the city of Lib<sub>1</sub>.

The interpretation favored by Skousen (2005b, 1464–1470) is that the initial group of founders from the Old World was “Mulek, and those who came with him into the wilderness.” Under this interpretation, the entire body came with Zarahemla, or at least if there were people left behind, they are not mentioned. This interpretation also means that we don't know when the group moved from the south wilderness/land of Bountiful area to the land of Zarahemla other than that it was sometime after approximately 450–400 BC based on the visit of Coriantumr<sub>2</sub>. This interpretation also leaves open the possibility that the people of Zarahemla occupied a land which was not a wilderness and had prior or existing occupants.

The Book of Mormon does indicate that the last king of the Jaredites, Coriantumr<sub>2</sub>, visited the people of Zarahemla for a period of nine “moons,” but it does not say exactly when that occurred, although it was likely after they moved to the south wilderness as they may have moved to avoid the Jaredite conflict. Ether 13:21 does indicate that Coriantumr<sub>2</sub> would receive a burial by “another people receiving the land for their inheritance,” indicating that he died at the end of the nine-moon period with the people of Zarahemla. That they were able to communicate with him would indicate that they were still in the Olmec language area or had just recently relocated.

Based on the readings of the statements so far in the Book of Mormon, there is no clear indication that the people of Zarahemla prior to Mosiah<sub>1</sub> directly observed the ruins and destruction for which the land of Desolation was named.

At this point, because of a paucity of information involving the people of Zarahemla and Mulek, a more specific chronology is difficult to establish. However, the order of geographic movement is possible to determine as follows:

1. Landing in the land of Desolation
2. Establishment in the area of La Venta
3. Movement to the “south wilderness” (later portion of the land of Bountiful)

4. Movement to the land of Zarahemla

Figure 81 indicates the geographical locations related to the people of Zarahemla. The locations are generally placed because they are only generally known. The location of Zarahemla is a general location based on the Sorenson model. This sequence generally aligns with the Zoque linguistic migration after around 500 BC, as discussed by Gardner (2015, 222).

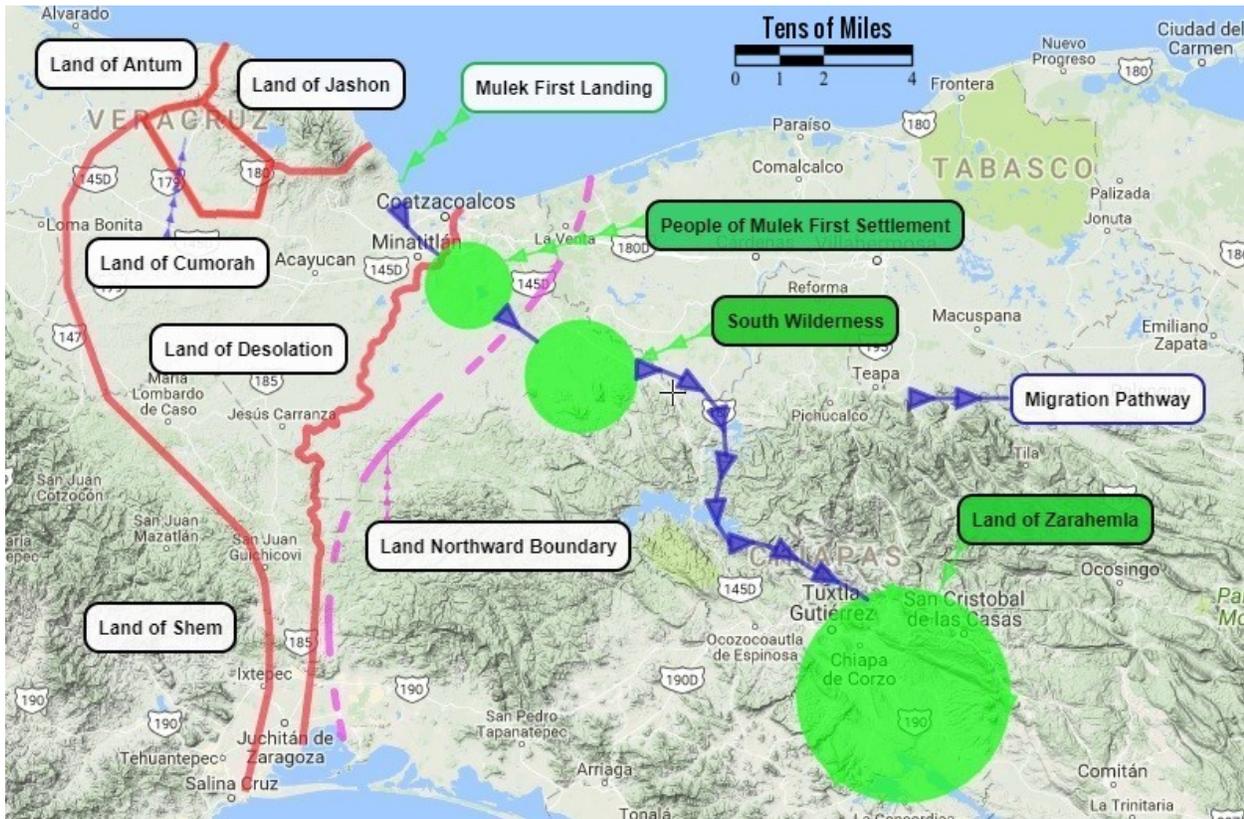


Figure 81. Movements of the people of Mulek (people of Zarahemla).