Proper Names and Political Claims: Semitic Echoes as Foundations for Claims to the Nephite Throne

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Abstract: *The Book of Mormon contains examples of phonemes in character names that resemble Semitic root words. The possible meanings of the names and their timing in the Book of Mormon narrative provide a deeper level of context to the Nephite political challenges in the books of Mosiah through 3 Nephi. Specifically, the English phonemes for the Hebrew and Arabic root-word for "king," M-L-K, appear in character names in the Book of Mormon narrative when the people of Zarahemla, who were descended from Mulek, the last king of Judah, are discovered by the Nephites in the book of Omni. "King" names then appear frequently during the time in the narrative in which there are attempts to reestablish a monarchy during the early reign of the judges. "King" names disappear after "Moroni put an end to those king-men, that there were not any known by the appellation of king-men" (Alma 51:21, 62:9). The presence and timing of these "king" names suggests that the Mulekite claim to the local Israelite throne resonated rhetorically through Nephite politics for over a century and was violently contested in the multiple civil and external wars in the books of Alma through 3 Nephi.*

Readers of the Book of Mormon are exposed to over 300 proper names of characters and places.[1] Many of the names are Biblical names, or direct copies of Biblical names, but many of the names in the Book of Mormon are unique to that book. While early critics once attributed the unique names to the active imagination of Joseph Smith, Jr., the translator,

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1. This is one of the "fun facts" that can be found in the *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, website of the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Fun_Facts#.

English-language scholars of the last century have had more access to ancient Near Eastern texts and look at the unique names as evidence that supports the historicity of the Book of Mormon as an ancient text. For an early example, in 1957, Hugh Nibley gave his opinion that the names of Lehi's children were "pure Arabic" and that some of the unique proper names in the Book of Mormon resembled "Egyptian and Hebrew … along with a sprinkling of Hittite, Arabic, and Greek names."[2] Scholars have built on that initial work, and much has now been written about linguistic evidence for Book of Mormon authenticity. Summarizing this work, Kyler Rasmussen writes that "these efforts have yielded dozens of plausible Semitic and Egyptian etymological connections and dozens of meaningful wordplays that suggest that these names were far from random selections from Joseph's brain."[3]

We will discuss material that implicitly provides evidence that can contribute to the conversation of authenticity; however, this is mainly focused on understanding the narrative of the Book of Mormon more deeply. It will, therefore, focus on describing linguistic patterns that add to the work of other scholars to make connections between seemingly unrelated events and themes. These connections help further the work to more "fully comprehend the reality" that Mormon was trying to convey in the Book of Mormon, "because unconscious and unstated background knowledge and off-stage actions that are present only by

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2. Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, 1988), 52, 188. https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/12/.

3. Kyler Rasmussen, "Estimating the Evidence – Episode 21: On Onomastic Origins," Interpreter Foundation (blog), November 24, 2021; https://interpreterfoundation.org/estimating-the-evidence-21/. If the reader is interested in recent linguistic apologetics, there is an excellent source that reviews two books by Brian Stubbs linking Hebrew to a family of Native American languages. See Jeff Lindsay, "The Next Big Thing in LDS Apologetics: Strong Semitic and Egyptian Elements in Uto-Aztecan Languages," review of *Changes in Languages from Nephi to Now* and *Exploring the Explanatory Power of Semitic and Egyptian in Uto-Aztecan by Brian D. Stubbs, Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 26 (2017): 227-67, https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-next-big-thing-in-lds-apologetics-strong-semitic-and-egyptian-elements-in-uto-aztecan-languages/. See also Brad Wilcox, Wendy Baker-Smemoe, Bruce L. Brown, and Sharon Black, "Comparing Book of Mormon Names with those Found in J.R.R. Tolkien's Works: An Exploratory Study," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 30 (2018): 105-24, https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/comparing-book-of-mormon-names-with-those-found-in-j-r-r-tolkiens-works-an-exploratory-study/.

implication will sometimes be the key to a fuller understanding of an intended meaning."[4]

Most of the names addressed herein are not strictly Biblical, and the Book of Mormon is the only source for them, therefore they are not necessarily ancient Semitic names. However, these names share a phonetic resonance with the sounds M-L-K, which is the root word for "king" in three Central Semitic languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic. Previous authors have analyzed some of these names from a Hebrew and Aramaic perspective but not from an Arabic perspective. We will first examine the root, then give examples of its appearance in the Book of Mormon, then describe the Mulekites (who introduce the root into the narrative), and finally address each of the examples in chronological order while explaining the significance that the name contributes to the narrative.

Roots, Patterns, and Forms in Semitic Languages

Some background into the structure of two Central Semitic languages is necessary to see the importance of the names in the Book of Mormon. The parts of language that are important in this case are roots, patterns, and forms. Roots are the core of a word that carry the essential meaning. Nearly all languages utilize roots that can be added to or changed to give additional meaning to the word. In English, we may take the word "king" and consider it the root of the adjective "kingly" or the possession "kingdom." In Semitic languages, most nouns can be broken down into roots and patterns. Roots are usually consonants, and patterns are usually vowels, with some exceptions. For the relevant examples, the Aramaic and Hebrew word for "king," מֶלֶךְ, (pronounced "mehlek") has the three characters for the consonants that are rendered M-L-K, written right-to-left, in English.[5] The Arabic word for "king," ملك (pronounced "malik"), has the cursive letters of the English phonemes M-L-K, also written right-to-left. Writing the short vowels "a" and "i" is often optional. Changing vowels in the pattern can change part of the meaning of the word. For example, if a writer added an "a" sound to the end of the M-L-K root in Arabic, it would become ملكة (pronounced "malaka") and

4. Val Larsen, "In His Footsteps: Ammon₁ and Ammon₂," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 3 (2013): 87, https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/in-his-footsteps-ammon-and-ammon/.

5. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed., trans. M.E.J. Richardson, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 590–93.

mean "queen" in English. Adding another "m" sound to the beginning of the root changes it to "kingdom," مملكة, and in Hebrew מַמְלָכָה. Words like *property* and *dominion* can be written in both languages with this root.[6] Herein, the M-L-K root will be evident many times in proper names, and its meaning of "king" will explicitly deepen the context in the historical narrative of the Book of Mormon.

Examples of M-L-K Names

Table 1 details examples of the M-L-K root that are unique to the Book of Mormon. M-L-K root names that are Biblical, such as those found in several of the Isaiah chapters of 1 and 2 Nephi, the name Melchizedek, found in Alma 13:14, and the excerpts of Malachi, in 3 Nephi 24, are excluded from this discussion because their Semitic origins are already well-known, and they do not refer to characters or places that play roles in the narrative of the Book of Mormon.

Table 1. M-L-K names in the Book of Mormon.

Name	Identification	Reference
Amaleki$_1$	Writer in book of Omni	Omni 1:13
Amaleki$_2$	Accompanies Ammon to find Zeniff's people	Mosiah 7:6
Mulek	Son of Zedekiah	Mosiah 25:2
Amlici	Attempted coup	Alma 2:1–10
Amlicites	Followed Amlici	Alma 2:11; Alma 3
Melek	Land west of Sidon	Alma 8:3
Amulek	Alma's companion	Alma 8:21, 10
Muloki	Aaron's missionary companion	Alma 20:2
Amalekites	Dissenters from Nephites	Alma 21–24; Alma 43
Amalickiah	Sought to become king	Alma 46
Amalickiahites	Followed Amalickiah	Alma 46:35; Alma 49
Mulek	Nephite city	Alma 51:25–26
"King-men"	Killed by Moroni	Alma 51:21; 62:9
Mulek	Name for the entire Nephite land	Helaman 6:10

This is not the first attempt that scholars have made at linking the M-L-K phonemes in some of the names in the Book of Mormon to the Semitic M-L-K root. The Book of Mormon Onomasticon, an online Wikipedia-style resource that summarizes the work of many authors on the possible meanings of the unique Book of Mormon names, mentions the possibility that the M-L-K root gives meaning to some of these names

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6. Ibid.

in Hebrew, but some scholars hesitate to accept the names that start with an "A" as Hebrew M-L-K names.[7] They may not have considered the possibility that the M-L-K root does not need to be strictly Hebrew, but can be descended from Central Semitic languages generally.

Broadening the linguistic lens used to analyze the names allows us to incorporate many of those names that start with an A. In Arabic, the root is not damaged by that initial vowel in several cases, which could be a sound like an Arabic Hamzated Alif, as will now be shown. For example, the M-L-K root can be put into an Arabic verb or adjective form.

This requires some explanation. There are ten main verb forms in Arabic that can modify the roots, with the first form being the bare root. Much like changing a noun with a pattern of vowels, one can change the meaning of the verb by adding sounds to change its form. Changing the form of a verb according to one of the ten forms can change it from an active to a passive verb, indicate causation, show reflexivity, or evince intensity. For example, using the ملك root as a verb in Arabic can mean things similar to "possess, to be master of, to rule over."[8] The first and fourth forms of the ملك root would make a verb that could be transliterated into Amluku, Amlaka, or simply Amlek, أَملك, which could mean "I'm taking over" in the first form and "to take possession" in the fourth form. Similarly, using that root in an adjective, "Amlak" can mean "one who possesses most."[9] Words transliterated into "amlak" can also mean possessors, possessions, or angelic messengers of God.[10] One could maintain a similar meaning of the word even when adding or changing short vowels, as in pronouncing the *e* as an *i*, or separating the *M* and *L* with an *a* or *u*. Placing the M-L-K phonemes into an Arabic verb form or using them in an adjective is significant because the M-L-K Semitic root now begins to be more visible in the above names that do not start with an English *M*.

The previous omission of Arabic as a contributing lens for analyzing these names was natural for earlier scholars. The widely known Israelite

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7. See *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, s.v. "Amaleki," https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/AMALEKI, for an example of the scholarly reaction to an "A" before the M-L-K root.

8. Francis Joseph Steingass, s.v. "أَملك", in *The Student's Arabic–English Dictionary*, (London: W.H. Allen (1884), 1057, https://archive.org/details/cu31924026873194/page/1056/mode/2up?view=theater&q=king.

9. Wikipedia.org, s.v. "أَملك," https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%84%D9%83#Arabic.

10. Steingass, *Student's Arabic-English Dictionary*, 1057.

heritage of the characters in the Book of Mormon make Hebrew the natural choice for scholars who are searching for meaning in those names. However, there are several reasons why Arabic could also contribute to a legitimate framework.

First, in Proto-Semitic, which linguistic anthropologists consider to be the ancestor to both Semitic languages, the M-L-K root can have an "a" sound at the beginning for the noun "god."[11] Second, Hebrew and Arabic originated close together, and are related. Early scholarship described the relationship in close terms. Explaining the culture surrounding Lehi and his family, Hugh Nibley wrote that the tribe of Manasseh, of which Lehi and his descendants were a part, was closest to Arab tribes and also had ties to the Egyptians, and there are textual clues in the book of 1 Nephi indicating that Lehi may have had a strong connection to both groups.[12] It has long been known that most Israelites in Judea in the 6th century BC spoke Aramaic, which was a Central Semitic language that was more closely related to Hebrew than it was to Arabic.[13] However, Nibley wrote that "in Lehi's day the Aramaic and the Arabic spoken in the cities were almost identical" due to their having similar pronunciation.[14]

Recent scholarship similarly broadens the relevant linguistic field. Brian Stubbs conducted a major study of Uto-Aztecan languages and found commonalities between Uto-Aztecan words and the same words in Egyptian, Phoenician, and Arabic. He reached some important conclusions:

> Some Semitists are now suspecting that some northern Israelites may have kept their original Aramaic, or were bilingual, adding Hebrew, but keeping their Aramaic. Hebrew was not the original language of the Israelites as many suppose. Abraham and Laban the Aramean and his daughters Leah and Rachel, the mothers of Israel were all Aramaic speakers. And according to the UA data, the Lehi-Ishmael party's language seems to have been quite Aramaic-like or Hebrew-Aramaic mix. … The Mulekite language may have been Hebrew when

11. "'amlāk- 'god'" in *Semitic Languages: An International Handbook*, eds. Stefan Weninger, Geoffrey Khan, Michael P. Streck, Janet C. E. Watson (Berlin, DE: de Gruyter, 2011), 245.

12. Nibley, *An Approach*, 52. See also 1 Nephi 1:2 for the well-known reference to the Egyptian language.

13. *Encyclopedia Brittanica*, s.v. "Aramaic Language," https://www.britannica.com/topic/Aramaic-language

14. Nibley, *An Approach*, 194.

fleeing Jerusalem, but their probable passage on a Phoenician vessel had them shifting to the dialect of the majority — the Phoenician majority.[15]

Stubbs' studies found over 1000 pairs of words that had apparently survived not only the nearly 1000 years that transpired between Lehi's journey from the ancient Near East and the Nephite destruction but also the nearly 1600 years that has passed since then. This incredible resilience of language illustrated by Stubbs could hypothetically account for the use of an initial "a" sound that does not damage the M-L-K root in Book of Mormon names, that was present in Proto-Semitic before Lehi, and is still present in Arabic today. For these reasons, and other reasons concerning the timing and use of these words in the textual narrative to be explained below, one should consider it probable that these names are linguistic descendants of M-L-K root Semitic words generally and not require them to comply strictly with Hebrew.

Significance of M-L-K Names

As will be explained in detail in the following pages, the M-L-K root appears in proper character names with surprising regularity in a specific part of the storyline of the Book of Mormon. Then it completely stops. This period begins with the appearance of the Mulekites in Omni 1. The M-L-K root continues to occur frequently during the reign of the judges. At that time the Nephites were often struggling to retain a free government against groups that sought to re-establish a monarchy. As explained below, there are strong reasons to expect Mulekites to contend for an Israelite throne. These M-L-K names were no longer used for people after "Moroni put an end to those king-men, that there were not any known by the appellation of king-men" (Alma 51:21, 62:9). Thereafter, Mulekites, who are attempting to re-establish monarchy over the Nephites, transition to Jaredite-inspired names beginning in Helaman 1. It will become clear why this correlation is not likely accidental and how linking the M-L-K name to the Mulekites, and linking Mulekites to attempts at re-establishing a king over the Nephites, deepens the discernable political-historical narrative of the books of Mosiah through Mormon. First it is necessary to briefly describe what is already known about the Mulekites.

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15. Brian D. Stubbs, "Changes in Language from Lehi Until Now," paper presented at the 2016 FAIRMormon Conference, Utah Valley Convention Center, Provo, Utah, August 5, 2016, https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/conference/august-2016/changes-languages-nephi-now.

The Mulekites: Heirs to the Throne of David

The literature specifically about Mulekites is limited. The word *Mulekite* is not actually in the text of the Book of Mormon but is used in Church and academic literature as a synonym for the "people of Zarahemla" (Mosiah 1:10; Mosiah 25:2, 3, 4, 13).[16] The term *Mulekites* will be used here because it is not only shorter, but it also has the M-L-K phonemes in it. John L. Sorenson wrote the most complete report about the Mulekites, and it reveals much historical background into their origins and role.[17]

To summarize what is relevant, Zedekiah was the last king of Israel before it was destroyed in 586 BC. Zedekiah had a child named Mulek who, with others, escaped the destruction of Jerusalem. These refugees were eventually led by the Lord to an area to the north of where Lehi landed in the American continent (Omni 1:15-16; Mosiah 25:2). Sorensen emphasizes that the name *Mulek* has the root M-L-K in it and indicates that it is historically possible that Zedekiah could have had a child of that name. In fact, Mulek is likely the same person as the Malchiah mentioned in Jeremiah 38:6.[18] The fact that the descendants of Mulek could have claimed direct lineage from king David and the last king of Israel will be a recurring theme in describing the relationship between M-L-K names and the political claims of Nephite dissident groups.

Sorensen described the Mulekites as a likely source of idolatry and perhaps political trouble for the Nephites. However, he concluded that descendants of Nephite kings would be more likely to lead attempts to restore the monarchy because their claims to the throne were more recent.[19] Val Larsen, writing two decades more recently, notes that there were contentions over this issue between the Nephites and Mulekites in the days of king Benjamin, "but those tensions seem to diminish

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16. See "Introduction to the Book of Omni," *Book of Mormon Seminary Teacher Manual* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012), 175; "And My Soul Hungered," *Book of Mormon Gospel Doctrine Student Manual*, Lesson 16 (Salt Lake City: Corp. of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), 148.

17. John L. Sorensen "The 'Mulekites,'" *BYU Studies* 30, no. 3 (1990): 6–22. https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol30/iss3/8. See also H. Curtis Wright, "Mulek," Encyclopedia of Mormonism, https://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Mulek.

18. Several scholars believe these are likely the same person. See *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, s.v. "MULEK," https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/MULEK#cite_note-1, for a discussion of this name. For an audiovisual summary see, "Book of Mormon Evidence: Mulek, a Son of Zedekiah," Book of Mormon Central (website), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzlq3bEuWR0.

19. Sorensen, "Mulekites," 17.

over time" until the reign of the judges reignites the issue during the book of Alma.[20] We join the conversation at that point, arguing that the given linguistic and contextual evidence should give more weight to the likelihood that Mulekite acquiescence to Nephite political leadership was tenuous and temporary and that their claims to the Israelite throne were used as a rhetorical basis for repeated wars for a century.

The Significance of "King" Names, in Chronological Order

We now examine instances of the M-L-K root chronologically according to Table 1. There appears to be a clear connection between the appearance of the phonemes of this root and the presence of Mulekites as actors in the narrative, especially when there are efforts to return to a monarchial form of government. This correlation is evidence that Mulekites probably advanced repeated claims to the Nephite throne and likely made explicit claims that were based on their royal heritage as descendants of king Zedekiah of the Old World.

Amaleki and Mulek

Amaleki is the first M-L-K name mentioned for a character who has a role in the Book of Mormon narrative. Writing after his father, Abinadom, Amaleki is the final narrator in the book of Omni. His entry into the second plates of Nephi comes after the entries of many generations of previous authors had become successively shorter, probably due to a lack of space (Omni 1:30). He breaks the pattern of short and minor entries on the plates of Nephi to highlight the escape of a man named Mosiah and "as many [Nephites] as would hearken to the voice of the Lord" (Omni 1: 12). They escaped from the land named Nephi that their people had inhabited for several hundred years. While fleeing into the wilderness, presumably from the Lamanites, these refugees discovered a people that were called after the name of their leader, Zarahemla. These people had come "out from Jerusalem at the time that Zedekiah, king of Judah, was carried away captive into Babylon … and were brought by the hand of the Lord across the great waters, into the land where Mosiah discovered them" (Omni 1:15–16). These are the Mulekites.

The appearance of the name *Amaleki* in the chapter when the Mulekites are introduced is not likely coincidental. Enough time had passed between Abinadom's and Amaleki's entries on the plates that Amaleki could be writing well after these events had transpired. He could

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20. Larsen, "In his Footsteps," 93, 100.

then be named after a Mulekite if Abinadom had married a Mulekite and named his son to indicate this descent. Hypothetically, in this name and in those to follow, the M-L-K root could be desirable for any parents wishing to put a reminder of royal descent upon their child. A Mulekite mother would be a reasonable source of that wish.

There is a question of whether Amaleki was born before the time that $Mosiah_1$ led Nephites away from the land of Nephi, making it possible that his M-L-K name could be an adopted title or a peculiar coincidence, but it is unlikely. Amaleki stated that "I, Amaleki, was born in the days of Mosiah; and I have lived to see his death; and Benjamin, his son, reigneth in his stead" (Omni 1:23). As is the case today (as in *anno Domini nostri Jesu Christi 2024*) time then was often counted from the reigns of individuals (Matthew 2:1, Luke 1:5, Luke 3:1). Additionally, there is no indication that $Mosiah_1$ was a king over the Nephites before he had a group of refugees follow him and he was "made king over the land of Zarahemla" (Omni 1:12). Like $Alma_1$, $Mosiah_1$ could have been a dissenter from Nephite politics whose religious leadership expanded to include political leadership once he isolated a large group of followers. Perhaps only then did he become a candidate for political leadership over the people of Zarahemla. Like Lehi, he could have taken the plates of brass from the political authority, or he could have been the one responsible for them without being king, much like Abinadom kept records though he was not king. Therefore, the phrase "days of Mosiah" likely places Amaleki's lifespan to the time after Mosiah became king over the combined Nephite-Mulekite peoples which, in turn, means that Amaleki's name is likely intentionally, not coincidentally, a Mulekite name.

The next $Amaleki_2$ comes to the story nine years later, when a descendant of Zarahemla named "Ammon took three of his brethren" to check on those Nephites who had returned to the land of Nephi (Mosiah 7:3, 6). He plays no further specific role in the story, but he is possibly a descendant of Zarahemla because Ammon was a descendant of Zarahemla and $Amaleki_2$ is explicitly referred to as one of his brethren. This possibility that he is a descendent of a previous king of the Mulekites, who was a descendant of Zedekiah, reinforces the connection between Mulekites and the M-L-K root.

It is unlikely that these two Amalekis are the same person. The first Amaleki stated that he was about to die in Omni 1:30, and the men who went with Ammon were described as "strong" (Mosiah 7:2). It is not completely clear if his brotherhood with Ammon is literal or religious. If it was literal, it would be understandable if the second Amaleki was

a nephew or other relative of the first and wanted to go find the brother of the first, who had gone to the land of Nephi (Omni 1:30). If this is the case, it could indicate that Abinadom might have married an immediate relative of Zarahemla. The second Amaleki cannot be a son or descendant of the first because the first Amaleki had no children (Omni 1:25).

Mulek is the next M-L-K name mentioned in the narrative. He is mentioned in Mosiah 25:2 (see, also, Omni 1:15 and Helaman 6:10) as a descendant of the king Zedekiah who escaped Jerusalem. He is mentioned here because the people of Zarahemla, which included his descendants, are noted as being more numerous than the Nephites who were under king Mosiah. It seems safe to assume that he is the son of Zedekiah later spoken of in Helaman 6:10, as explained above. According to Royal Skousen,

> The printer's manuscript in Mosiah 25:2 has the spelling "Muloch," which the 1830 typesetter changed to "Mulok." For the 1879 edition, Orson Pratt changed "Mulok" to "Mulek" in the LDS text, under the reasonable assumption that the individual named is the Mulek mentioned in the book of Helaman.[21]

This example of flexibility with transliterating the spelling into English is further indication that the names discussed herein are possibly M-L-K root names.

Mosiah Ends the Monarchy

Before more "king" names are discussed, it is important to note the political position the Nephites now found themselves in at the end of the book of Mosiah. Appreciating their position will give context to these important parts of the Book of Mormon narrative and will be relevant in understanding the importance of further M-L-K names. The M-L-K naming pattern helps to indicate that the Mulekite claim to the Nephite throne was likely the political root of the multiple external and civil wars in the books of Alma through 3 Nephi, as explained below.

While the beginning of the book of Mosiah highlights the spiritual unification of the Nephites and Mulekites, the end of the book of Mosiah highlights the political transition from a united monarchy to a constitutional democracy that initiates a steady flow of violent political contests. King Mosiah$_2$ finds himself without willing heirs to the throne

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21. Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, 2d. ed.* (Provo, UT: FARMS, Brigham Young University, 2017), 3:1516.

as his sons had all chosen to go on missions to the Lamanites. Mosiah then makes a proclamation to radically change the political system and transition away from monarchy (Mosiah 29). This Nephite transition to a reign of judges is made much more complicated because of the existence of the Mulekites.

In establishing the reign of the judges, Mosiah was not only taking the opportunity to make the best out of his sons' unwillingness to take the throne. He was also possibly trying to prevent the spiritual and political problems that the Nephites would be faced with if the Mulekites were allowed to influence the selection of the next king. The Mulekite political influence would be problematic for several interrelated reasons. The Mulekites were most of the population, had a strong heritage of monarchy, carefully remembered their genealogy (Omni 1:18), and had a valid claim to any throne among the Israelites that might be available should any Israelite king find his sons unwilling to inherit the throne. The Mulekites could claim the throne of David, being descended from the tribe of Judah and its last king. Indeed, if they had returned to Jerusalem, they could have rightly contested that throne. Mulekites could have felt justified in contesting any available throne among any other Israelite tribe as well.

There is another aspect of establishing the reign of the judges upon Mulekites that was possibly challenging. Ending monarchy in favor of judges would leave this branch of the House of Israel resembling the time of the judges in Israelite history that preceded the establishment of the throne of David. This would possibly look like a political regression that would dishonor both king David's legacy and his present descendants, the Mulekites.

For these reasons, Mulekites could justifiably claim leadership of the Nephites. In comparison, the Nephites were from relatively lowly Manasseh (Alma 10:3) and Ephraim (through intermarriage with the children of Ishmael[22]). Further, they could not even claim the birthright leadership within the descendants of Lehi due to Nephi being younger than Laman. Potential political rhetoric that incorporated the above elements would require immense skill to circumvent. These details could have made the transition extremely difficult had his sons publicly

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22. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions* 3:197–98, as cited in "Book of Mormon as Stick of Ephraim: Joseph Fielding Smith Statement," Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research (website), https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/answers/Source:Book_of_Mormon_as_Stick_of_Ephraim:Joseph_Fielding_Smith_statement.

renounced the throne before Mosiah had prepared the people's minds for an alternative regime. As will be seen later, the combination of these Mulekite and Lamanite claims possibly motivated several conflicts, expanding civil wars between the Mulekites and Nephites into external wars between Nephites and Lamanites.

This brings up the question of why the Mulekites would have agreed to Nephite governance in the first place. Omni 1:17 states that "they had had many wars and serious contentions" among themselves "from time to time." It would be possible that if their society were to have a chance to end their contentions through a neutral option, it might seem desirable, especially if that neutral option was a long-lost related tribe that could restore their original language and records to them. Also, intermarriage between the leading families of the Nephites and Mulekites would likely be a helpful prerequisite for political unification of the two peoples. As Val Larsen suggests, it is likely that either $Mosiah_1$ married into Zarahemla's family or at least had his son Benjamin do so and that $Mosiah_2$ was likely at least half-Mulekite.[23]

To $Mosiah_2$'s aid in these complications, he had at least three major sources of unity for his people that eased the transition to judges in the face of potential Mulekite claims to the throne. First, king Benjamin had already converted the Mulekites to the same general belief system based on Christ during his own departing political transition sermon (Mosiah 5:1–2). This system included renaming of their society after Christ. This would hopefully allow them to forget their tribal identities.[24] His speech also attempted to prevent political conflicts, as Val Larsen explained:

> Though spiritual themes predominate in the sermon he delivers on this occasion, the political subtext in Benjamin's coronation speech is unmistakable. He condemns "open rebellion" (Mosiah 2:37; cf. Alma 3:18) and urges his people to submit to the rule of $Mosiah_2$ as they have submitted to his rule. He equates the commands of $Mosiah_2$ with the commands of God, making obedience to $Mosiah_2$ and the maintenance of peace a religious duty. He suggests that any who listen to Satan and contend against $Mosiah_2$, as some contended against Benjamin himself, will risk the damnation of their soul (Mosiah 2:31–33).[25]

23. Larsen, "In His Footsteps," 100.
24. Ibid., 93.
25. Ibid.

Looking ahead, the book of Alma takes as its logos this narrative that political rebellion is the same as spiritual rebellion. Once this narrative had become hegemonic, those who wished to contend politically in the book of Alma of necessity also contended spiritually. It became a clear pattern that those who initiated violence against the political system were also targeting the church. The habit of violently fighting over the rights to spiritual and political leadership was only minimized among the Mulekites while there were popular, strong kings, like Mosiah$_1$, Benjamin, and Mosiah$_2$. A later reign of judges may have been an invitation for people who would have otherwise only been spiritual dissenters to add a political justification to their rebellion.

When king Benjamin had "desir[ed] to know of his people if they believed the words which he had spoken unto them … they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us" (Mosiah 5:1–2). While this did not permanently erase idolatry (Mosiah 27:8), the believers remained a majority of the population during the reign of Mosiah$_2$, which was also mostly peaceful:

> Now it came to pass that there were many of the rising generation that could not understand the words of king Benjamin, being little children at the time he spake unto his people; and they did not believe the tradition of their fathers. … And they were a separate people as to their faith, and remained so ever after, even in their carnal and sinful state; for they would not call upon the Lord their God. And now in the reign of Mosiah they were not half so numerous as the people of God; but because of the dissensions among the brethren they became more numerous. (Mosiah 26:1, 4–5)

The fact that the unbelievers were still a minority during the time of Mosiah$_2$ assisted his efforts at changing their laws. This pattern of dissensions only expanded into politics after Mosiah$_2$ was gone.

The second fact that assisted Mosiah$_2$'s political transition was that the Nephites and Mulekite considered themselves the same people (Mosiah 25:13), even though they gathered separately for official events (Mosiah 25:4). It is very likely that there were residual language and cultural barriers that made the separation natural. Their unity was likely provided by their church and their shared political leader. When these tethers later weakened, this opened a vacuum and invited division.

The third fact that helped Mosiah$_2$ convince his people to accept the ending of the monarchy was that he was trusted completely by his people:

> They did esteem him more than any other man; for they did
> not look upon him as a tyrant who was seeking for gain … for
> he had not exacted riches of them, neither had he delighted
> in the shedding of blood; but he had established peace in the
> land, and he had granted unto his people that they should
> be delivered from all manner of bondage; therefore they did
> esteem him, yea, exceedingly, beyond measure. (Mosiah 29:40)

Mosiah's explanation of why judges would be more desirable than
a king in chapter 29 was not only true, but also a public relations success
that specifically avoided mentioning Mulekite claims to the throne.
Instead, it emphasized his own children as the potential troublemakers,
sketched potential downsides of a hypothetical wicked king, and used
an example of an actual wicked Nephite king. Assuming the record of
Mosiah 29 is complete, Mosiah did not explicitly state that the spiritual
implications of an unrighteous Mulekite taking the throne was a more
important issue than restoring kingship to its proper tribe and lineage,
but it is clear given the context that this was possibly a problem that he
was trying to prevent. The success was short lived, as the immense trust
in Mosiah did not transfer well to the institution that he left them with.
As explained in the next section, it apparently took only five years for the
first challenge to Nephite political authority to arise.

While the Lamanites made external claims to Nephite leadership
roles based on birthright (Mosiah 10:11–16), there are no indications that
the Nephites had any civil contentions over their own throne until after
the discovery of the Mulekites (Words of Mormon 1:15–16). The explicit
linking of external and civil strife in the Book of Mormon narrative then
begins in the book of Alma. While the book of Alma will end the M-L-K
pattern of character names for the possible reasons proposed below, it
will not end the pattern of Mulekite claims to the Nephite throne.

Amlici and Amlicite Claims

Amlici joins the narrative in Alma 2 as a wicked man who seeks to use
the newly established powers of a democratic majority to erase those
very powers and return the people to a monarchy and place himself
at the top of it. There is no record of what Amlici said to get people to
support him or what rhetoric the "wonderful contentions" (v. 5) that
took place before the vote were predicated on but clearly he intended
to destroy the church (v. 4), and he quickly gathered many to support
him. This sudden and dramatic shift, seemingly without explicit cause,

is an instance of missing context that can be informed by considering the Mulekite dynamic.

When Mosiah$_2$ ended the monarchy, the top political position was filled by an individual who was ethnically and politically non-Mulekite. Alma$_2$ was not only likely to have not been an ethnic Mulekite but was also from a group that had dissented away politically from the combined Nephite-Mulekite society. Zeniff, who had led this Nephite group, was "over-zealous" to lead several people to reinhabit the land of Nephi, which is remarkable considering that it represents a choice to reenter the Lamanite sphere of influence and abandon the Mulekite one (Omni 1:27–30; Mosiah 9–10; Mosiah 7:21). Evidently "when [Zeniff] saw that which was good among [Lamanites]" it seemed preferable to what the combined Nephite-Mulekite society had become (Mosiah 9:1). Alma$_2$'s possible status was completely non-Mulekite, descended from the anti-Mulekite dissenters, yet chosen to lead a society that had Mulekite members that had descended from the line of David. This could have been interpreted as a slight against Amlici and fellow Mulekites. Feeling blocked from their perceived rightful royal status, some families among the Mulekites would only need a spark to ignite a rebellion.

Alma$_2$'s actions as chief judge and high priest likely gave aggrieved Mulekites ammunition for their propaganda against him. Nehor's execution in Alma 1 likely contributed to the rhetoric that Amlici used to justify rebellion. Nehor had begun to preach ideas that gained wide reception, and that would prove hard to extricate from Mulekite groups in the book of Alma. Nehor killed a Zeniffite-descended church leader, Gideon, and was condemned to death by Alma$_2$. Mulekites could have reinterpreted this execution for propaganda purposes as an official use of force to persecute their Nehorite beliefs.[26]

A second official action of Alma$_2$ was also probably used against him politically. He was using the state to punish those who were not following church teachings. As the church members in the combined Mulekite-Nephite society became "far more wealthy than those who did not belong to their church" (Alma 1:31), non-members were reverting to

> indulg[ing] themselves in sorceries, and in idolatry or idleness, and in babblings, and in envyings and strife; wearing costly apparel; being lifted up in the pride of their own eyes; persecuting, lying, thieving, robbing, committing whoredoms, and murdering, and all manner of wickedness;

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26. I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for this observation.

nevertheless, the law was put in force upon all those who did transgress it, inasmuch as it was possible. (Alma 1:32)

While church members could justify to themselves the use of the law against those who were sinning, it would be easy for a budding political dissident to publicly describe this as a form of using the state to enforce the will of the church, especially when both the church and state were headed by the same person. Attempts by dissenters to take over the government and destroy the church could involve a propagandized memory of these times as evidence that Christians should not head the government nor be given political influence.

Another action, in this case from Alma$_2$'s religious brethren, may have further been used to justify and initiate the attempted coup. Amlici appeared in the fifth year of the reign of the judges, which may have been the same year that Aaron and Muloki arrived in the Nehorite city named Jerusalem.[27] The arrival and preaching of representatives of the state church could have been interpreted as a direct political and religious threat. The fact that the bearer of this threat, Aaron, was the legitimate heir to Mosiah's throne, could have been used for propaganda purposes by the Nehorites to say, "we can no longer trust that the regime that Mosiah bequeathed us will allow us to peacefully enjoy our religion. Not even separating ourselves and creating a new city can protect us from them. We must end the Nephite-influenced regime to ensure our own security." Enter Amlici. There were repeated attempts in the books of Alma and Helaman to destroy both the church and the system of judges. Viewing them as Mulekite political responses to Nephite influence and policy is helpful for explaining why the civil contentions in Alma were so sudden, popular, and debilitating for the Nephites.

Amlici had "drawn away much people after him, even so much that they began to be very powerful" (v. 2). His supporters lost the popular vote in verse 7, "but Amlici did stir up those who were in his favor to anger against those who were not in his favor … and [they] did consecrate Amlici to be their king … and he commanded them that they should take up arms against their brethren … that he might subject them to him." (vv. 8–10). Some scholars have doubted that Amlici could have created so much drama in only one year.[28] However, recognizing Amlici

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27. Compare the section headings of Mosiah 28, Alma 2, Alma 17, and Alma 21 to find approximate years.

28. J. Christopher Conkling, "Alma's Enemies: The Case of the Lamanites, Amlicites, and Mysterious Amalekites," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14, no. 1 (2005): 114, https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?params=/context/

as a politician who tapped into strong underlying Mulekite claims, some of which had likely been contested before, such as in Benjamin's day (Words of Mormon 1:16), allows for rapid political developments.

Amlici's followers, named Amlicites (v. 11), would certainly include many Mulekites for reasons already mentioned: their historical rights to the throne of David, their habit of civil wars, and their idolatry. The Nephites had none of these characteristics before they met the Mulekites, and would have the most to lose, especially their church, if their society were to return to a monarchical system and a culture dominated by Mulekites. Loss of religious rights due to Mulekite dominance might be enough to initiate a fulfillment of Mosiah$_2$'s prediction that if another took the throne it would be possible that his son would wage a war to try and reclaim the throne (Mosiah 29:7). This war would not be unwarranted, from the perspective of most of the people, who would want to keep their right to have the church.

Amlici was only prevented from becoming king over all the people because of the "people of God" (v. 11). The Amlicites suffered an initial defeat, then joined with an army of Lamanites and made a second attempt at defeating the Nephites. This started a pattern of civil wars between groups of Mulekites/Nephites expanding into external wars involving Lamanites. It may first seem odd that a group of Nephites could have joined with Lamanites so easily, but the Lamanites had previously met and fought Mulekites (Words of Mormon 1:13–14), and some Mulekites had potentially dissented away to them (Words of Mormon 1:16). This makes it possible that the Amlicites could have been familiar enough with Lamanites to be ready to make an agreement with them to reestablish authority over the Nephites. For the Lamanite king, the idea that a people would reject monarchy could be considered dangerous lest that idea spread to his own people. Also, the king of the Lamanites was with the army that encountered the Amlicites, enabling the Lamanite army to make a quicker decision to join the Amlicites. This combined force was also defeated and Amlici was killed (Alma 2:31). This is the last reference to the "Amlicites" in the Book of Mormon, but perhaps only by this name. The Amalekites, another aligned group discussed later, are likely a related people.

jbms/article/1395/&path_info=18631.pdf. This point is also accepted uncritically more recently: Benjamin McMurtry, "The Amlicites and Amalekites: Are They the Same People?," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 25 (2017): 273, https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-amlicites-and-amalekites-are-they-the-same-people/.

The identity of Amlici as a Mulekite is probable, but to label the name Amlici as an M-L-K name is only slightly possible. Amlici is pronounced with an *s* as the final consonant, both in the English and Arabic translations, but that was not always the case. First, the plural form, Amlicites, was first written with a *k* in the printer's manuscript of the Book of Mormon for the first two times it was copied:

> The spelling of the name "Amlici" and the associated name "Amlicite" involves considerable complexity. "Amlici" appears 16 times (from Alma 2:1 through Alma 2:31). Unfortunately, the original manuscript is not extant for any of this portion of the text, but in the printer's manuscript the name is consistently spelled as "Amlici" and without any miswriting or immediate correction. … On the other hand, the first two occurrences in [the printer's manuscript] of "Amlicites" (in Alma 2:11–12) are spelled "Amlikites." But afterwards, for 25 more occurrences (from Alma 2:13 through Alma 3:20), we have a consistent "Amlicites."[29]

Second, the current in-progress re-translation of the Book of Mormon into Arabic renders Amlici with an *s* sound in the last consonant, but the Church's 1985 Arabic translation renders this word with a *k* sound.[30] Together, these bring up the unlikely possibility that it could have been an M-L-K root word. The presence of the M-L-K root is not a requirement for considering that Amlici was a Mulekite, but his desire to rule and his ability (described above) to find a large and ready-made audience for his cause make his identity as a Mulekite and as a descendant of David and Zedekiah probable.

Melek, Amulek, and Muloki

After the defeated Amlicites fled with the Lamanites, the next M-L-K name to appear is Melek, referring to the land west of Sidon, where Alma had a successful missionary journey (Alma 8:3). It is possible that it was

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29. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 3:1666. Skousen suggests that Joseph Smith likely dictated the name with a "k" sound in the original manuscript, 3:1667.

30. To find the example of Amlici spelled with an M-L-K in Arabic, see page 295 of the 1985 Arabic translation of the Book of Mormon: www.churchofjesuschrist.org%2Fbc%2Fcontent%2Fshared%2Fcontent%2Farabic%2Fpdf%2Flanguage-materials%2F34406_ara.pdf&usg=AOvVaw1hXDKlnudSyc65yWh6OLB1.   For the in-progress translation that shows Amlici with an M-L-S, see https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/alma/3?lang=ara.

a predominantly Mulekite city based on its name. It is not likely the same place as Mulek, from Alma 51:25–26, because they are specifically described as being different places.

The next M-L-K character name does not belong to a dissenter. It is that of Alma's famous missionary companion, Amulek. This might be the only example where an M-L-K character name applies to a non-Mulekite. Even though this is an exception to the claim that the M-L-K root is a clue to Mulekite identity, it still reinforces the concept that M-L-K names belong to Mulekites. This is because Amulek felt the need to specify his identity as a Nephite to Alma (Alma 8:20) and his lineage as a Nephite after mentioning his name to the people of Ammonihah (Alma 10:3). He may have anticipated that people would think he was a Mulekite. He could still have inherited his name from Mulekite ancestry on his maternal side, but he only mentions his male ancestors. It is clear, however, that he was a highly respected member of a Mulekite city, and this was perhaps indicated by the M-L-K in his name.[31]

The next M-L-K character name, Muloki, was Aaron's missionary companion to the Lamanites.[32] He had been imprisoned and then later freed by Ammon and Lamoni. His relationship to others is not clear. Instead of being an actual son of king Mosiah$_2$, he was likely a Mulekite who accompanied them, as mentioned in Mosiah 28:1 and Alma 17:8.

Amalekite Claims

The next M-L-K character name is the Amalekites. They join the story as resistant-to-conversion Nephite dissenters living among the Lamanites.[33] Without careful reading, the origins of the Amalekites are not readily apparent. By the time that Aaron and Muloki encountered them in Alma 21:1–4, they had joined with the Amulonites to build a city named Jerusalem and had established synagogues after the order of Nehor. Jerusalem would be the most appropriate name of a Mulekite city and may indicate that a group of Mulekites had earlier decided to leave the combined Mulekite-Nephite society (Words of Mormon 1:16).

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31. Larsen, "In His Footsteps" n20. An *Interpreter* reviewer of this paper noted that his high social status in a Mulekite city might have been indicated by the M-L-K in his name.

32. The first scholar to notice the M-L-K root in this name was Ariel Crowley in the 1955 *Improvement Era*, as cited in the *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/MULOKI#cite_note-4.

33. Only one of them converted (Alma 23:14). None of them repented after killing the defenseless Anti-Nephi-Lehis (Alma 24:28-29).

In the original manuscript, Oliver Cowdery used the following varieties of spellings for them: Amaleckites (Alma 43:6), Amelekites (43:6), Amalickites (43:13), Amelickites (43:20), and Amalekites (43:44)[34] What is consistent in the spelling of these characters is the maintenance of the consonant phonemes M-L-K. Semitic vowels can be interchanged without changing the root. Again, while the M-L-K root was not recognized in the names that began with "A" by scholars who were strictly using Hebrew, it can appear to be a legitimate linguistic descendant of Semitic languages more broadly, as discussed earlier.

Scholars have debated for a generation whether the Amalekites are the same people as the Amlicites.[35] Some linguistic evidence tends to support uniting them, yet contextual evidence implies keeping them separate. This can remain unresolved for now, but some progress can be made regardless. For our purposes they are politically aligned peoples who fill similar literary functions, as Mulekite dissenters from the Nephites. Connections between the dissenting groups help reinforce their identities as Mulekites. As Val Larsen explained:

> Words of Mormon 1:16 makes it clear that dissenters have been going over to the Lamanite side since the time of Benjamin. And the shared Nehorite religion of the Amlicites/Amalekites also necessarily entails the movement of people between Jerusalem and Zarahemla prior to the first year of the reign of judges when Alma$_2$ executed Nehor in Zarahemla. So dissenting Mulekites have been living in both locations before and after the inauguration of the reign of the judges. The fact that the uprising of the Amlicites in the land of Zarahemla was coordinated with an attack from the land of Nephi (Alma 2:24) also suggests that there is an ongoing relationship between dissidents in the two lands. Relatedly, it is possible that the leader Amlici takes his name from the people he leads and who preexist him rather than the other way around. The next leader of the kingmen insurgency, 'Amalickiah,' has a remarkably

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34. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 3:1669.

35. For authors who seek to completely unite the Amlicites with the Amalekites, see Conkling, "Alma's Enemies," 108–17, 130–32, https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1395&context=jbms; Larsen, "In His Footsteps;" and "How Were the Amlicites and Amalekites Related?" at Book of Mormon Central (website), https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/how-were-the-amlicites-and-amalekites-related. For an article arguing for separating the Amlicites and Amalekites, see McMurtry, "The Amlicites and Amalekites."

similar name, again assuming an accent on the first syllable. 'Amalickiah' may imply son of Amlici (Amliki) as Moronihah is the son of Moroni. We would thus see a similar pattern in the name changes of the successive overall leaders of both the Nephite and Amlicite/Amalekite/Amalickiahite armies.[36]

As explained later, perhaps Mulekite groups chose similar names to indicate their politics and religious alignment. Or, perhaps some of the names were used by Mormon as editorial titles.

Another Mulekite

Amalekites later joined the Zoramites in attempting to establish a kingdom and enslave the Nephites (Alma 43:6, 39). This attempt to take over the Nephite government can be linked to Mulekite attempts at seizing power. The invading Lamanites teamed with Zoramites and Amalekites and were led by a man named Zerahemnah. The name Zerahemnah obviously resembles Zarahemla, the descendant of Zedekiah and the chief Mulekite-Nephite city. That name hints that he was a Mulekite who may have felt justified in taking the Nephite government.

Amalickiah and the King-Men

Amalickiah is the next M-L-K name for a person who attempted to replace the Nephite government with himself as a king. He was the head of those who rejected the teachings of Helaman after the departure of the prophet Alma$_2$. "In fact, in the original manuscript Oliver Cowdery frequently misspelled 'Amalickiah' as 'Ameleckiah' (28 times) and Amelickiah (21 times)."[37] Non-Arabic scholars have not reached a unified significance for his name, but in Arabic, his name is merely the word *Amalekite* with an Arabic Nisba suffix, meaning in this case "I am from the Amalekites" or even "I possess the Amalekites."[38] This indicates that he was inheriting, or commandeering, the cause of the rebellious Mulekites, which was to return the Israelites to a kingdom under its perceived rightful heirs. Mirroring Amlici, Amalickiah's civil war, detailed in Alma 43–62, soon involved the Lamanites. It then initiated a section of scripture that goes

36. Larsen, "In his Footsteps," n18.

37. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 3:1669.

38. Wikipedia.org, s.v. "Nisba (Onomastics)," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nisba_(onomastics), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Construct_state#Arabic. See *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, s.v. "Amalickiah," for alternative, but less conclusive, perspectives. https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php?title=AMALICKIAH.

into very specific detail about how the civil and external wars were fought and eventually won by the Nephites (Alma 43–62).[39]

The tribal identity of Amalickiah seems to indicate political opportunism. Amalickiah is referred to as a "Nephite by birth" (Alma 49:25), and his brother Ammoron defines himself in a letter to Moroni as a "descendent of Zoram, whom [Nephite] fathers pressed and brought out of Jerusalem" (Alma 54:23). To what extent their lineage was mixed with Mulekites is not specified but is likely from the M-L-K root in the first name. For political purposes, Ammoron explained that "I am a bold Lamanite; behold, this war hath been waged to avenge their wrongs, and to maintain and to obtain their rights to the government" (Alma 54:23). Unlike his brother, who probably drew on Mulekite support initially when among the Nephites, Ammoron was claiming the Lamanite justifications for war, which they made based on being descended from Lehi's eldest son. He had just inherited the Lamanite throne, so he adopted their grievances. Together, these brothers are justifying themselves with whatever rationale has the highest propaganda value based on their current circumstance and audience.

Amalickiah and Ammoron clearly saw the opportunistic value of identity politics. Their rhetoric against the Nephites was powerful. Having brought people to this hemisphere against their will (Zoramites), robbing others of their rightful inheritance one here (Lamanites), and then denying others their rightful claims to a throne (Mulekites), the Nephites were close to now losing their own liberty due to these brothers. This is an intersection of oppressions that the Nephites are being accused of by them. According to those who played these identity politics, the solution for this intersection of oppressions was not merely to create an alternative system to which they could repair, like the Amalekites of Alma 21, but to extend their power without limits and reduce the religious and political rights of those who were most enjoying their liberty. Parallels to today are implicit.

The brothers and their followers met their match with Captain Moroni, the Nephite general, who had also previously defeated Zarahemnah. Moroni "knew that Ammoron had a perfect knowledge of his fraud; yea, he knew that Ammoron knew that it was not a just cause that had caused him to wage a war against the people of Nephi" (Alma 55:1). Moroni recognized the fraud in their claims and saw these claims as a potentially

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39. The war includes the city named Mulek from the table of M-L-K names (Alma 52:2, 16, 22; 51:26).

catastrophic threat. Moroni's response was radical and instigated changes to Nephite-Mulekite naming patterns, as described next.

Moroni Targets M-L-K

Captain Moroni executed the few Amalickiahites that refused to support the free government after the initial defeat of these royalists (Alma 46:35). This 'cleansing of the inner vessel' (Alma 60:23) was then repeated twice more during this extended civil war (Alma 51:21; 62:9) upon groups that were appropriately called "king-men" (Alma 51:5). The antagonists were named "king-men" not merely for it to make sense to us in English, but because these people likely used names that contained the M-L-K root. Perhaps Mormon could have chosen to write this name-label "king-men" with an M-L-K root that continued the lengthening pattern in the book of Alma, but it is certainly much easier for us that he did not. "Amalickiahiyites" could have been a legitimate, but unwieldy, alternative for another iteration of Amalickiahites.

The king-men were mostly Mulekites, not only because of the obvious Anglicized "king" in their name and their connection to previous similar groups, but also because the record references their "high birth" (Alma 51:8) and their claim to "blood of nobility" (Alma 51:21). There would be no rational basis for Lehites to claim noble blood in the faces of the descendants of king Zedekiah of Judah. Descendants of Ishmael and Zoram would also need clearer credentials to claim noble blood. No other present groups could make claims to noble blood or high births, so it is clear these king-men were Mulekites.

When "Moroni put an end to those king-men, that there were not any known by the appellation of king-men" (Alma 51:21), he was primarily targeting Mulekites not strictly because of their tribal identity but because of the catastrophic effects of the politically destructive way they self-identified. As Captain Moroni explained to the chief judge in a letter, the political and spiritual destruction from their "stubbornness and the[ir] pride" (Alma 51:14, 18) was imminent:

> Had it not been for the war which broke out among ourselves; yea, were it not for these king-men, who caused so much bloodshed among ourselves; yea, at the time we were contending among ourselves, if we had united our strength as we hitherto have done; yea, had it not been for the desire of power and authority which those king-men had over us; had they been true to the cause of our freedom, and united with us, and gone forth against our enemies, instead of taking up their

swords against us, which was the cause of so much bloodshed among ourselves; yea, if we had gone forth against them in the strength of the Lord, we should have dispersed our enemies, for it would have been done, according to the fulfilling of his word. But behold, now the Lamanites are coming upon us, taking possession of our lands, and they are murdering our people with the sword, yea, our women and our children, and also carrying them away captive, causing them that they should suffer all manner of afflictions, and this because of the great wickedness of those who are seeking for power and authority, yea, even those king-men. (Alma 60:16–17)

It seems possible here that Moroni wasn't targeting all or only Mulekites, but just those who called themselves king-men. However, Moroni had already stated that only people descended from Joseph were following the Title of Liberty (Alma 46:23). He then related the selling of Joseph of Egypt, which Judah had participated in, to the bondage and potential sale of the Nephite descendants of Joseph by their brethren, who would have likely been Judahite (Mulekites). Taking this literally, only members of the tribe of Joseph were actively fighting alongside Moroni early in the conflict, but not all Mulekites were fighting against them. Later, many Mulekites fought alongside Moroni, especially after Pahoran and Moroni united their forces.

Connecting the Mulekites to the king-men and then showing Moroni target the king-men might erroneously open Moroni to accusations of genocide. Genocide is defined as "the deliberate killing of a large number of people from a particular nation or ethnic group with the aim of destroying that nation or group."[40] However, genocide would be an inappropriate label for Moroni's actions for several reasons.

First, as just mentioned, Moroni did not target all Mulekites. Most of the population were Mulekites by genealogy, but most of the population were against the king-men. This is why these civil conflicts expanded and involved the Lamanites: the rebellious Mulekites could not get enough people with whom they shared ancestry to share a political identity. Therefore, it was not the blood line but the political attitude that was the target. The fighting was directed at those who had openly called for betraying and overthrowing the free government and separating themselves socially with a claim of inherited entitlement to power. As

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40. Oxford Languages, "Genocide," https://www.google.com/search?q=genocide +definition.

Pahoran, the chief judge, explained in a written response to Moroni's letter, those who were against the king-men later in the conflict were called "freemen" (Alma 61:3–4; 51:6–7, 62:6), not an ethnic designation.

Second, Moroni was described as righteous in the strongest terms (Alma 48:17). One relevant way this was exemplified was that he frequently avoided unnecessary military killings (Alma 44:1; 51:19–20; 55:18–19). Repeated genocide was not part of his character profile.

Finally, and more technically, even though this rebellion was rhetorically justified based on family histories, they were both tribes of Israel. This was an inter-tribal, but intra-genos dynastic struggle over internal order that the Mulekites were initiating and the Nephites were resisting. Moroni's efforts were ultimately successful, and the Nephites and supportive Mulekites eventually defeated the Lamanite armies that had been led by Amalickiah and Ammoron.

The End of M-L-K Naming Patterns

As seen later, Mulekites did survive this war, but importantly, Semitic M-L-K names were no longer found for characters in the Book of Mormon narrative after Moroni's persistent efforts made such proud names undesirable. The discontinuation of M-L-K names after this point may be evidence that the M-L-K naming pattern was being used at times as an indicator of political distinctness and opposition to the Nephite's decentralized political system; it often designated belonging to a "faction" (Alma 58:36). The repeated civil wars eventually required a drastic change in culture that extended to naming patterns among Mulekites. The statement that "there were not any known by the appellation of king-men" (Alma 51:21) is Mormon's notice to the reader that no new characters in this record will have M-L-K names.

This sudden ending of popular naming patterns after authoritative effort has precedence in the Bible. Hosea 2:17 states: "For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name." After this point, there was a sudden and permanent absence of *-baal* names among the tribe of Judah.[41]

Mulekite Claims Continue

Erasing the name did not end the tribal-political habit, however. After this point, the next Mulekite who sought a throne over the Nephites took a Jaredite name, even though he was directly descended from Zedekiah

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41. Nibley, *An Approach*, 193–94.

(Helaman 1:15). This is not a coincidence. Not only had the authoritative Mulekite name been discouraged, but the Jaredite names had been published. In the time between the end of the king-men and the rise of Coriantumr, Helaman$_2$ had widely shared the record of the Jaredites (Alma 63:12) as his father had been instructed to do by Alma$_2$ (Alma 37). Earlier, Coriantumr was the name of an undefeated king among the Jaredites (Ether 12–15). His name would be an appropriate and politically useful title for someone who decided that it was their right to reestablish monarchy. This Jaredite name also has an effect of distancing him from the mainstream Nephite culture.[42] Jaredite names remained popular for the leaders of rebellious political movements after this point.

Later, after Coriantumr's defeat, groups named "robbers of Gadianton" (Helaman 6:37) were justifying their predations and warfare in the name of recovering "their rights of government" (3 Nephi 3:10). It is possible they were referring to the same Mulekite claims as those who came before. This does not preclude the possibility that they were also using Lamanite claims when convenient. Dissenting robbers remained a problem in this era until Nephite and Lamanite societies combined in mutual defense and eliminated the robbers after they failed in a major assault (3 Nephi 4).

The final M-L-K name, Mulek, is the general name given to the land of the north, where the Mulekites were first encountered, as opposed to the south, where Lehi arrived. This name was relevant only in the time when all the Lehite, Zoramite, Ishmaelite, and Mulekite peoples had united in peace (Helaman 6:10). This name, Mulek, was not used to refer to the land a generation later, after Jesus Christ had appeared to the inhabitants as recorded in 3 Nephi 11. This appears to be because it was no longer relevant, as there is no indication that any self-aware Mulekites survived the "more great and terrible destruction in the land northward" that was caused by a combination of natural disasters at the time of the death of Christ (3 Nephi 8:12).

The idea that the Mulekite identity ended with the great destruction has textual evidence. There are several places in scripture where the Mulekite presence is conspicuously absent after this destruction. Importantly, Christ specified that the survivors of the great destruction

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42. Godfrey J. Ellis, "The Rise and Fall of Korihor, a Zoramite: A New Look at the Failed Mission of an Agent of Zoram," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 48 (2021): 51, https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-rise-and-fall-of-korihor-a-zoramite-a-new-look-at-the-failed-mission-of-an-agent-of-zoram/.

were descendants of Joseph (3 Nephi 15:12). If people who would have preferred to maintain a distinct Mulekite identity were present, descendants of Judah would have merited mention. Additionally, 4 Nephi 1:37–38, Mormon 1:8, and D&C 3:17–18 each list tribes of Book of Mormon peoples, after the great destruction, without distinguishing any Mulekites or people of Zarahemla. It seems likely that this incredible destruction impacted them so severely that only those Mulekites who felt more closely connected to a separate lineage survived. That is more likely than presuming that the above four references are each mistaken or incomplete.

Overall, the presence of M-L-K names corresponded clearly with a time of political unrest and religious challenges that were related to Mulekite claims to the Israelite throne. The appearance of these names at the time of the discovery of the Mulekites, and the ending of these names after Moroni eliminated the king-men, solidify the connection of the Mulekites to these M-L-K names.

Unanswered Questions

Some questions related to the presence and significance of M-L-K roots remain and are relevant to many of the above names and the Nephite political situations.

- Why would some of these characters in the Book of Mormon coincidentally have names that correspond with their actions in the narrative?
- Why were the Mulekite political dissenters' justifications for rebellion not explained more explicitly in the books of Mosiah, Alma, Helaman, and 3 Nephi?
- How does the Mulekite influence in the Book of Mormon inform the book as a whole?
- How can the Nephite troubles with the Mulekites reflect their possible experiences with political propaganda?

In the following sections, I examine each of these four questions, in turn.

Parents, Politics, and Historians

Question 1: Why would some of these characters in the Book of Mormon coincidentally have names that correspond with their actions in the narrative? Were these M-L-K names given at birth, or adopted upon entering politics? If the name were given at birth, it could indicate

a family desire to imitate ancestors, maintain distinct or distanced royal identities within the Nephite system, or even a desire to have a child acquire the throne. If it is an adopted name for society and politics, it could appropriately explain their behavior in the case of Amalickiah and his followers, including the Amalekites, Amalickiahites, and the king-men.

Imitating the roles of one's namesake is a theme in the Book of Mormon. First, two important Mulekite characters in this story are $Ammon_1$ and $Ammon_2$, whose remarkably similar adventures

> play key and interlinked roles in the unfolding of this macro narrative. It is through the eyes and ears of $Ammon_1$ that readers first see and hear why monarchy needs to be abolished. Then, $Ammon_2$ plays his role in abolishing the monarchy by refusing to be king and by persuading thousands of Lamanites to embrace the ancient religion, the foundational myth, and the new civic culture of the Nephites.[43]

Second, $Helaman_3$ explicitly reminded his sons, Lehi and Nephi, that he gave them their names to encourage them to imitate their namesakes:

> Behold, I have given unto you the names of our first parents who came out of the land of Jerusalem; and this I have done that when you remember your names ye may remember them; and when ye remember them ye may remember their works; and when ye remember their works ye may know how that it is said, and also written, that they were good. Therefore, my sons, I would that ye should do that which is good, that it may be said of you, and also written, even as it has been said and written of them. (Helaman 5:6–7)

Whether M-L-K names were given at birth or adopted, they could have indicated appropriate political titles for someone or a party of people who were actively trying to restore or seize a monarchy. The meaning of the name matches the role of the character. As observed by Hugh Nibley, there is a supporting example of characters named after their roles and actions:

> Paanchi, the son of Pahoran, and pretender to the chief-judgeship [Helaman 1], has the same name as one of the

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43. Larsen, "In His Footsteps," 91–92. The entire article is dedicated to describing this similarity. Compare 3 Nephi 3:18 and Mormon 6:13 to see another example of similar names in similar roles.

best-known kings in Egyptian history, a contemporary of Isaiah and chief actor in the drama of Egyptian history at a time in which that history was intimately involved in the affairs of Palestine. Yet his name, not mentioned in the Bible, remained unknown to scholars until the end of the nineteenth century. This Egyptian Paanchi, whose name means "He (namely Ammon) is my life," was the son of one Kherihor (the vowels are guesses!), the High Priest of Ammon, who in a priestly plot set himself up as a rival of Pharaoh himself, while his son Paanchi actually claimed the throne. This was four hundred years before Lehi left Jerusalem.[44]

The similarity is that this Paanchi and Kherihor are in the same situation as some of these M-L-K names, in which their names reflect, in either history or meaning, the roles that they are taking in the narrative.

Perhaps there is another explanation. Were some of these names given to these persons by Mormon for editorial reasons? Mormon, the prophet-historian who edited, condensed, and wrote notes upon a millennia of Nephite historical records to compile the Book of Mormon around AD 380, had a lot of material to cover. During the thirteen years when Mormon had the Nephite records but was not engaged as a military commander (compare Mormon 3:11 and 5:1), he needed to read, organize, and evaluate hundreds of records, summarize them, draft his copy, prepare metal plates of sufficient size and quality for this initial copy, and then complete the final draft, leaving space for the near future. He did all of this while keeping an eye on his people's civil war and possibly relocating himself and his many records. If he created an editorial naming system for some characters in this period, which preceded his own by 450 years, he had that license. As Brant Gardner stated when speaking of the Nehors, "I strongly suspect that it was called by some other name in the source plates and that the identification of 'order of the Nehors' is Mormon's label written long after the fact."[45]

Seeing some of these names as M-L-K-inspired editorial titles could help explain some of the naming patterns, for example, why Oliver Cowdery's variant spellings of the Amalekites, listed earlier, came

44. Nibley, "An Approach," 189.

45. Brant Gardner, "Mormon's Editorial Method and Meta-Message," (paper given at FAIR Mormon 2008 Conference, South Towne Exposition Center, Sandy, Utah, August 7, 2008), https://www.fairmormon.org/fair-conferences/2008-fair-conference/2008-mormons-editorial-method-and-meta-message.

to resemble the oncoming name Amalickiah, as noted by Royal Skousen.[46] To Mormon, this would be like saying, "Here's another usurper with a group of Mulekites who wanted to become king." The names could resemble each other purposefully, and then sound similar when read out loud to emphasize the continuity of their role as a pattern. Mormon used much of his history to record patterns, especially the "pride cycle."[47] It is not necessary to view some of these names as editorial titles as the characters could have adopted these titles themselves for the same reasons. In any case, it is not reasonable that Joseph Smith or his scribes could have been the originators of this M-L-K naming pattern.

Hidden Contexts

Question 2: Why were the Mulekite political dissenters' justifications for rebellion not explained more explicitly in the books of Mosiah, Alma, Helaman, and 3 Nephi? The most obvious answer is that Mormon had very little space in which to record a thousand years of spiritual lessons gleaned from their history (Helaman 3:14; Words of Mormon 1; Jacob 3:13; 3 Nephi 5; 3 Nephi 26:6; Ether 15:33). Related to this, by the time that Mormon was compiling these records and writing about them, the Mulekites may have been non-existent for nearly 350 years. The wars the Nephites and Lamanites fought during Mormon's lifetime give no other obvious references to Mulekites or their claims unless one considers opposition to the church. Mulekite irrelevance to the political and religious environment of Mormon's day might contribute to the lack of repeated explicit description of their political motivations during the reign of judges as Mormon read back through Nephite history and summarized what was important in his opinion. Val Larsen suggests that perhaps the omission was intentional:

> Mormon leaves [Mulekite justifications] unstated probably because it is so plausible that stating it might leave readers ambivalent about the conflict between the judges and the revanchist Amlicite/Amalekite king-men. Mormon reveals what was surely a key political fact and the strongest argument of the Mulekites — that they descend from Mulek, a son of Zedekiah — only after the land of Zarahemla has fallen

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46. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 3:1669.

47. The Pride Cycle (illustration), Media Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (website), https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/media/image/the-pride-cycle-76fd0d1.

into the hands of the Lamanites and thereby weakened any Mulekite claim to the throne (Helaman 6:10; 8:21).[48]

Mormon's faith and political sympathies prevent him from sympathetically articulating the point of view of the Amlicites, but his integrity as a historian compels him to report sufficient information for us to reconstruct the motives of those whose views Mormon reprehends.[49]

If explicitly omitting Mulekite justifications was intentional, it may be for the same purpose that Christ had in mind when he taught in parables to those who knew him in his mortality. Scripture is a gift that keeps on giving. There is more to learn "by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118), for those who seek to "remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon" (D&C 84:57).

Taking a Broader View

Question 3: How does the Mulekite influence in the Book of Mormon inform the book as a whole? Mormon obviously emphasized the time of the Mulekites in his record. The political and spiritual challenges posed by the Mulekites mirrored the challenges Mormon faced in his own day.

In The Words of Mormon, the insert between the books of Omni and Mosiah, Mormon interrupts the Nephite narrative as soon as the Mulekites are introduced. He describes how king Benjamin struggled against "much contention and many dissensions away unto the Lamanites" (Words of Mormon 1:16). These spiritual and political issues required that "king Benjamin, by laboring with all the might of his body and the faculty of his whole soul, and also the prophets, did once more establish peace in the land" (v. 18). One of the purposes of this interruption in the narrative might be to indicate that patterns of political and spiritual trouble were coming in the story, and that only relentless missionary work could solve it. He started that theme with the above quote.

After this introduction, the book of Mosiah first focuses on Benjamin's continued efforts in this regard (chapters 1–6), then focuses on a Nephite attempt to escape the society that had merged with the Mulekites (chapters 7–22). The text next explains the solution that the Nephite kings had found for managing two deeply different societies that were sharing a political system (chapter 29). For the Nephites, it would

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48. Larsen, *In His Footsteps*, 91.
49. Ibid., n10.

have been a political marriage motivated by necessity, since the Nephites needed more manpower to remain free from the Lamanites.

Remaining free from subjugation by Mulekites would require constant internal and external missionary work, as exemplified repeatedly by the books of Alma, Helaman, and 3 Nephi. This was especially true when the Mulekites joined the Lamanites (Amlicites) or harnessed them (Amalickiahites and king-men). Mormon began the book of Alma by stating Mosiah "had established laws, and they were acknowledged by the people; therefore, they were obliged to abide by the laws which he had made" (Alma 1:1). "The main narrative thread of the book then focuses on the conflict between those who accept and those who reject this obligation."[50] Once Nehor resorted to violence to enforce his spiritual dissention and Alma responded with a legal use of state violence, this opened the Nehorite-Mulekite rhetorical field to claims that Alma martyred Nehor, and therefore the only way to dislodge the hegemonic anti-Mulekites was with violence. Missionaries had to therefore ensure that most of the combined Mulekite-Nephite society believed in Christ, as opposed to Nehorite ideas. When the Amulonites/Amalekites embraced Nehorite ideas, and when Zoramites began drifting into Nehorite beliefs, missionaries needed to try to convert them back, which gave dissenters excuses to spark further fighting. Bringing believing Lamanites into the Nephite fold, such as the Ammonites, was also a political necessity.

In terms of Nephite politics during the reign of judges, Mormon probably found additional relevance to his own day in the repeated dynamic of Nephite pride leading to internal and external conflict, as found in Alma, Helaman, and 3 Nephi. This is clear from his emphasis on how that dynamic played out in his own time. From Benjamin's day until the coming of Christ, missionary work was the key to liberty (Alma 31). While it did spark excuses for war in the case of those who already wished to dominate the Nephites, it proved itself to be the key to victory.

An aspect of correct belief that Mormon consistently emphasized throughout the record was the dynamic of divine justice and divine mercy. While including the precise dynamic in Alma 42, he also warns against the Nehorite over-emphasis on mercy. The Nehorite beliefs that spread to the Amulonites, Lamanites, and Zoramites, disparaged justice and taught that sin did not exist (Alma 15:15; 18:5; 30:17; 31:9) and that sin could not prevent salvation (Alma 1:4; 11:37; 31:17). After the resurrected Christ taught the Gospel that replaced the Law of Moses, Mormon continued to emphasize both justice and mercy (3 Nephi 28:35;

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50. Ibid., 90.

Mormon 7), making it clear that the eventual destruction of the Nephites was a result of sin (Moroni 9).

Along with describing the spiritual health of the Nephites and linking that health to their performance in war, Mormon emphasized the struggles of righteous leaders during the reign of the judges and his own day. They were in a quasi-democratic system, challenged by internal disagreements that expanded into external conflict. Mormon's thirteen-year sabbatical from leading the Nephite armies gave him a chance to review how his struggles with leading the Nephites were preceded by others in similar positions. When Mormon read the story of Captain Moroni during that time, he related well even though four centuries separated them. They both tried to maintain the political liberty of a people that struggled constantly with being faithful to the Lord, in the face of overwhelming military challenges (Mormon 3:3). It is no surprise that he would name his own son Moroni.

Like Captain Moroni, Mormon believed that ending a civil war and establishing civilized behavior was a prerequisite for victory in external warfare (Alma 51:22; Moroni 9:11). During Mormon's second attempt at preserving the liberty and lives of the Nephites as their leader, he was unable to act as Captain Moroni did with the Mulekites in eliminating the dissenting elements that were inviting the warfare: "O the depravity of my people! They are without order and without mercy. Behold, I am but a man, and I have but the strength of a man, and I cannot any longer enforce my commands" (Moroni 9:18). Also, unlike Captain Moroni, Mormon was ultimately unsuccessful at establishing internal order and preserving his people.

In further contrast, in Captain Moroni's time, the political rhetoric against the Nephites had a strong element of demanding rights that are based on inheriting authority to rule the Israelites. In Mormon's day, robbers of Gadianton combined with Lamanites, Ishmaelites, and Lemuelites against the Nephites. Their stated motivations seemed to be vanity, pride, and differences in wealth (4 Nephi 1:41–46; Mormon 1:8, 9, 18). For Mormon, likely, the contrast between the political rhetoric of Moroni's day and his own was either not important enough to become explicit or was made explicit through the M-L-K editorial naming pattern.

As far as how Mormon's own identity factored into his telling of history, Mormon did describe himself as "a pure descendant of Lehi … and insomuch as the children of Lehi have kept his commandments he hath blessed them and prospered them according to this word"

(3 Nephi 5:20, 22). Mormon made extensive references to Israelites in general, but he was not as concerned to retell the history and lessons of the Mulekite tribe of Judah. For him, the important pattern to document was how the Mulekites might have played the same role as the Lamanites did in his own day. "If it so be that the [Lamanites] rebel against [the Lord], [the Lamanites] shall be a scourge unto [the Nephites], to stir them up in the ways of remembrance" (1 Nephi 2:24). This was appropriate since his record was primarily about bringing Israelites back to the covenant through Christ, rather than retelling the secular political history of Israelite tribes.

Rhetoric in Nephite Politics

Question 4: How can the Nephite troubles with the Mulekites reflect their possible experiences with political propaganda? Mormon's record does not dwell on political lessons at the expense of spiritual lessons, but it does contain political lessons. A possible lesson learned from the patterns of Mulekite-Nephite interactions is the danger of grievance-based propaganda when it is based on differences of identity and sin. As noted above, for Amlici and Amalickiah to quickly create large followings, and for Moroni to have to put down king-men three times, there needed to be serious grievances that were nursed regularly. These grievances likely had three main rhetorical threads that intersected:

1. Repressed authoritative rights to rule in the name of King David. Any Mulekite could relate to this right, especially when it was used for propaganda purposes.
2. Repressed Nehorite rights. The Nehorites could have claimed that the combined church/state regime martyred their founder and sent state representatives (the missionaries Alma$_2$ and the sons of Mosiah) to continue to weaken their beliefs, destabilize their social structures (Alma 35:6–10), and ruin their priestcraft (Alma 35:3). This would result in taking away their source of wealth and social power.
3. An emotional threat from church teachings. Christ-centered teachings about justice and mercy directly undermined the Nehorite beliefs in proudly justifying sin.

With these threads, Mulekite usurpers could appeal to ethos, logos, and pathos. As seen above in the cases of Amalickiah, Ammoron, and the robbers of Gadianton, these intersected threads could then be tailored to, or expanded for, whichever group the rebellions leaders sought support

from, except from strong believers. Whether it was Lamanites, Nephites, Zoramites, or Mulekites, Mormon showed in the books of Alma and Helaman that these groups could be either faithful and peaceful, or destructive of faith and society. All could be taught either to act to preserve their faith and liberties or be convinced to deny them to others.

Summary and Conclusions

This essay argues that the presence of M-L-K root Semitic names correlated to a specific time in the Book of Mormon narrative. The Semitic root word for "king" appeared in peoples' names in the Book of Mormon narrative starting when the Mulekites were discovered by the Nephites in the book of Omni. "King" names then appeared frequently during the time in the narrative in which there were attempts to reestablish a monarchy during the early reign of the judges. Sometimes these Mulekite names pertained to individuals who were actively working to establish themselves as kings. "King" names disappeared after "Moroni put an end to those king-men, that there were not any known by the appellation of king-men" (Alma 51:21). This linguistic correlation demonstrates that Mulekite claims to the Nephite throne were based on perceived rights to the Israelite throne from king Zedekiah, and that these claims were a major factor in the civil and external wars that threatened Nephite society during their reign of the judges.

Initial implications of recognizing Mulekites as a source of consistent political complications during the reign of the judges highlight the political skills and struggles of king Benjamin, king Mosiah$_2$, Captain Moroni, and Mormon. Nephite-Mulekite struggles make the story of the Book of Mormon more coherent and comprehensible and prepare the reader to better make applications to our lives and times.

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