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Where was the PaleoAmerind standstill?

Michael K. Faught

Archaeological Research Cooperative, 703 Truett Dr., Tallahassee, FL, 32303, United States

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ABSTRACT

After many years and much effort searching Beringia for the ancestors of Amerinds (PaleoAmerinds), archaeologists are empty-handed. Beringia certainly was the pathway for later peoples (Na-Dene and Inuit), but there is no persuasive evidence of an archaeological culture in Beringia during the last glacial maximum (LGM) when archaeologists expect an early, pre-Clovis culture group and biologists detect a long period of isolation—the "standstill." In this article, I show that archaeologists defer to biologists for proof of concept, and biologists use that deference to support their outmoded model that Beringia, or even greater Siberia, was the sole route by which all Native American people entered the hemisphere. I propose that the standstill took place in the Americas and that the pathway taken by PaleoAmerinds was by the Pacific Ocean, possibly from Southeast Asia.

1. Problem: location of the PaleoAmerind standstill

More than 30 years ago, Greenberg et al. (1986) modeled most indigenous people of the Americas as descendants of an early migrating population—PaleoAmerinds. This founding population was later followed by groups of biologically and linguistically distinct Na-Dene speakers and then Eskimo/Aleut speakers. I use this model as a starting point because its bio-linguistic structure continues to be repeated by biologists (Anderson, 2010:322; Mulligan and Kitchen, 2013; Mulligan et al., 2008; Raghavan et al., 2014; Reich et al., 2012; Schurr, 2004; Tamm et al., 2007). According to these biological studies, the earliest PaleoAmerind group must have been isolated from their direct ancestors, and others, anywhere from 26,000 to 18, 000 cal yr BP, essentially during the LGM. This isolation period is referred to as the "Beringian standstill," or the "Beringian Incubation Model" (Mulligan et al., 2008; Raghavan et al., 2015; Skoglund et al., 2015; Tamm et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2007). I argue that this standstill did not take place in western or eastern Beringia, submerged or terrestrially, or even in greater Siberia to the west, but rather that it happened in the Americas where multiple environments ideal for population isolation existed at those times.

In this article, PaleoAmerinds are modeled as a single cohesive social group, or multiple connected social groups, who arrived in the Americas sometime before 14,300 cal yr BP. They may have been forced to out-migrate due to environmental conditions or cultural conflict. Assuming they arrived in the Americas in sufficient numbers to survive and propagate, the earliest people retained their ancestral Asian mtDNA haplotypes and began their genetic divergence during this isolation period. Theoretically, these people should have left archaeological residue or other traces (e.g., skeletal or biomolecular), or both, of their propagation from one or more landfalls. Na-Dene and Eskimo/Aleut-speaking social groups produced archaeological material culture correlates in Beringia *Dyuktai*/*Denali* and *Paleo-Eskimo* that track their sequential propagations (Carlson, 1996; Dumond, 1980; Raghavan et al., 2014). However, there is no archaeological correlate for PaleoAmerinds in Beringia, eastern or western, during the LGM as expected by current models, nor is there any such correlate in greater northeast Siberia east of 130° longitude or north of 55° latitude (Dumond, 2011; Hoffecker, 2011; Kuzmin and Keates, 2005; Vasil'ev, 2011). Nor is there convincing evidence in unglaciated eastern Beringia (i.e., Alaska and Yukon) where a refugium is proposed as the locus of the standstill isolation (Llamas et al., 2016). There may be evidence on the now-inundated Pleistocene continental shelf, as Anderson and colleagues (2013) have proposed, but there is no evidence of propagation of such a population into the continent. If PaleoAmerinds trekked across the Bering land bridge, then there should be a non-Na-Dene/non-Eskimo/Aleut archaeological culture during the LGM, with evidence of propagation and adaptation southward into North America after 14,300 cal yr BP, and sites in South America should post-date sites to the north.

E-mail address: mfaught@comcast.net.
URL: http://www.mfaught.org

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The earliest known site in eastern Beringia with Dyuktai/Denali diagnostics is Swan Point, dating to about 14,000 cal yr BP (Holmes, 2011; Potter et al., this volume). The diagnostics include microblades produced from bifacial cores by the Siberian Dyuktai Yubetsu technique. This earliest assemblage at Swan Point is preceded by several sites south of the ice sheets, but especially Amerind mtDNA from coprolites at Paisley Caves, Oregon (Jenkins, 2007); an *in situ* biface and debitage from Page-Ladson, Florida (Halligan et al., 2016); and marine sea weed from a hearth at Monte Verde, Chile (Dillehay et al., 2008). Acceptance of these three sites, what I use as unequivocal examples, and assuming survival and propagation of those people, requires human entry into the Americas sometime before 14,300 cal yr BP, south of the ice sheets, possibly by means of a Pacific Ocean crossing (Faught, 2008).

Most researchers reject the probability, or even possibility, of peopling of the Western Hemisphere via late Pleistocene ocean crossings, especially across the Pacific. One reviewer of this article called the idea "far-fetched." Meltzer called its crossing "… very doubtful" (Meltzer, 2009 pp. 195). Madsen (2015 pp. 229) discounts it out of hand, and Anderson (2010) and Auerbach (2007) do not consider it at all. The Pacific is daunting. I understand and accept the arduous nature of crossing wide expanses of water, as well as the requirement that the migrants must have included quite a large number of people. Nevertheless, this alternative warrants consideration.

2. Short background: Its Hrdlicka's Fault

The way and tempo of the peopling of the Americas has confounded European scholars since the sixteenth century (Huddleston, 1967). They reviewed the books of the times and found several potential sources, the most popular being the Lost Tribes of Israel and Plato's narrative about Atlantis. Nevertheless, by the mid-nineteenth century, it was accepted that the New World was peopled from Asia via the Bering Strait. This connecting route into the Western Hemisphere gained dominance in the twentieth century with the particular influence of Ales Hrdlicka and his many influential publications, including *Shovel-Shaped Teeth* (1920), *The Origin and Antiquity of American Indians* (1925), *The Race and Antiquity of the American Indian* (1926), *Melanesians and Australians and the Peopling of America* (1935), and *The Problem of Man's Antiquity in America* (1942). Alternative migration theories were dismissed because of his authoritative power as Physical Anthropologist at the Smithsonian Institution. According to Hrdlicka, native people came late, and they came by way of Beringia. W.W. Howells, one of Hrdlicka's students, put it succinctly:

> "Where did the Indians come from? … Of course they came from Asia, where their racial cousins are, and they came over the Bering Strait. They could have come from nowhere else. They did not originate in the New World. They did not come from Europe, nor from Africa. And they assuredly did not cross the Pacific Ocean itself; the Indians, nowhere good boatmen, cannot be imagined, in a long-ago era before seaworthy boats had been invented, as having made a series of voyages which were too much for the mighty Polynesians …" (Howells, 1945 pp. 259)

Hrdlicka held that northeast Asia was the only place from which Native Americans originated and the Bering Land Bridge was the only possible route based on the phenotypic similarities among peoples living in Northeast Asia, Alaska, and the northwest coast of North America. The concept of walking across the Bering Strait was confirmed when archaeologist Nelson (1937) reported similarities between microblade core and blade production in northeast Asia and Alaska. Identification of differences among the various Beringian lithic assemblages resulted in the terms *Dyuktai* by Mochanov for those located at sites in northeast Asia and *Denali* by West for those located at sites in Alaska (Carlson, 1996; Slobodin, 2011).

Hrdlicka would have dismissed any attempt to model a potential Pacific Ocean crossing, as shown by his interpretation of robust dolichocranic morphologies in some Amerinds:

> "The only conclusion that appears possible in view of all the facts is that the hypothesis of either Melanesian or Australian, and even that of recognizable Polynesian, presence on the American continent is not demonstrable, nor even probable, that the dolichosteno-hypsicephalic cranium is not extraneous but represents one of the several cranial types of both the Indian and the Eskimo; and that whatever cultural or other resemblances may appear to exist between the pre-Columbian Americas and the South Seas must have other explanations than any material accession of the peoples of the latter parts of the world to the American populations" (Hrdlicka, 1935 pp. 48–49).

Nevertheless, Neves et al. (2007) and Powell (2005 pp. 198), among others, continue to find craniofacial similarities between some PaleoAmerinds and Polynesians (Auerbach, 2007 pp. 40). However, craniofacial morphologies are the result of a complex interplay of genetic and environmental conditions that can include climate, diet, activity, and other factors, in addition to representing ancestor-descendant relationships (Green, 2012). The point is that Hrdlicka's opinions and influence remain, to this day, as subtext for much of the discipline of anthropology and biology.

Consequently, most archaeologists start with Hrdlicka's supposition that the Bering Land Bridge was the sole pathway for the peopling of the Americas. Whether appealing to osteological or genomic evidence, specialists assume that the earliest New World inhabitants trekked across the Bering Strait from northeast Asia. However, none have identified an LGM archaeological culture in northeast Asia and all appeal to biological references to fill the gap (Goebel et al., 2008; Graf et al., 2015; Hoffecker et al., 2016; Meltzer, 2009; Pitblado, 2011). The geneticists consider *a priori* a Beringian (or greater Siberian) route for all indigenous Americans, but in particular the hypothetical PaleoAmerind standstill group. A few make this clear in their title (Fagundes et al., 2008a; Perego et al., 2009; Scott et al., 2016; Tamm et al., 2007), many in the abstract (Achilli et al., 2013; Fagundes et al., 2008b; Reich et al., 2012), and most in the first paragraph or two. Wang et al. (2007) stated as their research question, "… what records of the original colonization from Siberia are retained in Native American genetic variation?" Tamm et al. (2007) begin with, "Native Americans derive from a small number of Asian founders who likely arrived to the Americas via Beringia …." More recently, Skoglund and Reich (2016) note, "The first unambiguous evidence of modern humans in the Americas … was likely the consequence of migration from Beringia." Madsen (2015) provides additional examples.

Paradoxically, some geneticists now cite the above-mentioned archaeological literature as if archaeology supports their models (Achilli et al., 2013; Fagundes et al., 2008a, 2008b; Perez et al., 2009; Tackney et al., 2015). Apparently they are unaware, or unconcerned, that archaeologists cannot identify an archaeological culture during the LGM in Beringia where it is needed. Researchers surely must recognize that a LGM archaeological culture in Beringia or Siberia is required to support either a terrestrial ice-free corridor (IFC) route or a Pacific coastal route into the Western Hemisphere (Anderson and Bissett, 2015; Erlandson and Braje, 2011).

This situation is a classic example of affirming the consequent (Dincauze, 1984) or, in this case, beginning with the conclusion. One result of beginning with the conclusion is that it narrows the choice of out-groups when seeking biological relationships. Comparing samples from only northeast Asia or eastern Siberia

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