

A Tale of Two Migrations: Reconciling Recent Biological and Archaeological Evidence for the Pleistocene Peopling of the Americas

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Abstract This article synthesizes the 2000s-era “peopling of the Americas” data drawn from molecular biology, osteology, and archaeology. Collectively, they suggest that colonization proceeded in two pulses, both originating in western Beringia, and before that, south-central and southeastern Siberia. The first pulse occurred circa 16 k–15 k cal. B.P. by watercraft along the coast of Beringia and western North and South America. The second took place 1,000 years later and involved proto-Clovis hunter-gatherers who used the ice-free corridor as a conduit south. At least eight North American sites dating as far back as the Last Glacial Maximum suggest that the peopling picture may eventually need to change to accommodate an earlier than previously thought migration through the ice-free corridor. For now, the data are not strong enough to support this scenario, but they are tantalizingly close.

Keywords Peopling · Colonization · Migration · Americas · New World

Introduction

In 2000, in the pages of this journal, Fiedel overviewed then-current evidence, theories, and future research directions in the always controversial and fertile “peopling of the New World” arena. I pick up where Fiedel left off, summarizing how far we have come in the first decade of the 21st century in elucidating the who, when, where, and how of New World colonization. I do not reiterate ground covered by Fiedel. He did a comprehensive job of bringing readers up to turn-of-the-millennium speed. In addition, the peopling literature is expanding at an exponential rate as geneticists, biologists, oceanographers, and other earth, life, and even

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