

The origin of American Indian populations

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According to the evolutionary paradigm, the American Indians (Amerindians) have their origin in Asia. The widespread belief is that the ancestors of the American Indians migrated from Siberia across the Bering Strait, at the time there was a land bridge connecting the two continents. Dating from an evolutionary bias, this migration should have taken place 14,000–16,000 years ago. Others think the population of the American continent started much earlier, possibly over 20,000 years ago. In contrast, historical records of the Amerindians themselves speak of descent from the East. Here we present historical and biological evidence for the hypothesis that, in addition to Asian roots, the Amerindians of Central and South America may also have European/North-African/Middle-Eastern ancestors.

Ancient American civilizations

The first concrete civilizations in the Americas flourished from about 1700 BC. The Olmec culture should be regarded as the first real Amerindian culture. Their appearance has often puzzled scientists because of their obvious non-Asiatic facial features. About 1000 BC the greatly advanced Mayan civilization arose in Mesoamerica (the area extending approximately from central Mexico in the north to Costa Rica in the south). They have always been a mystery for modern scientists due to their highly developed building techniques (comparable to Egyptian and Babylonian architecture), hieroglyphic writing (which isn't found anywhere in Asia, the supposed source areas for the Amerindian population), language (which is also hard to trace back to Asian languages) and, especially, culture and religion. Their appearance was very different from the Asian and Siberian peoples, for they had a dark red skin, great curved noses and their eyes didn't have the typical almond-shape we see in the facial characteristics of most (northern) Amerindians (figure 1).

Creationists should be very cautious when considering how these civilizations arose, where they came from, and how to fit them into the biblical chronology. Most of the modern reconstructions of when and how these civilizations came and went are based upon architectural findings such as temples and cities. There is no real proof of the origin of these people who left these ruins. But there is one thing that most of the theories and chronologies have in common: they ignore the analogous histories and traditions that these people held themselves. We should ask ourselves: why don't we hear anything of the historical traditions of the Maya Indians and the Toltecs? Is it because all they knew was mere legend and myth, or is it because their history contradicts the evolution-philosophy-based historical consensus?

The traditions of the indigenous Americans

Interestingly, the histories and traditions of the American civilizations support the creationist viewpoint—often tracing their histories back to a world-wide flood. For instance, about the Toltec legend according their origin, an Aztec historian documented the following:

“It is found in the histories of the Toltecs that this age and first world, as they call it, lasted 1716 years; that men were destroyed by tremendous rains and lightning from the sky, and even all the land, without the exception of anything, and the highest mountains, were covered up and submerged in water fifteen cubits [caxtolmolatli]; and here they added other fables of how men came to multiply from the few who escaped from this destruction in a ‘toptlipetlocali’, that this word nearly signifies a closed chest; and how, after men had multiplied, they erected a very high ‘zacuali’, which is today a tower of great height, in order to take refuge in it should the second world (age) be destroyed. Presently their languages were confused, and, not being able to understand each other, they went to different parts of the earth.”¹

The Toltec and Aztec legends not only trace them back to the Flood, but even to the tower of Babel. The Choctaw Indians have similar legends according the building of a large monument and the confusing of tongues.² The Inca populations of Peru also trace their history back to the Flood. As historians in the 16th century observed:

“One thing is believed among all the nations of these parts [Peru], for they all speak generally and as well-known of the general flood which they call ‘unu pachacuti’.”³

The Maya of the Quiché kingdom in Guatemala's western highlands left their own unique traditions in the



Figure 1. Mayan art showing the distinct facial profile of the Maya people.

book called *Popul Vuh* (figure 2)—one of the few surviving Mayan books. It relates the creation of the universe in a way very similar to Genesis, with the creator-god *speaking* and *commanding* the creation into being. Also, the *Popul Vuh* tells about a former world destroyed by a flood.⁴

With these testimonies in mind, it is interesting to note that the same Mesoamerican populations often trace the history of their nations back to the *East*, from where the sun sets. Also, a lot of Amerindian traditions speak of their ancestors crossing a great body of water to reach their current homeland. The *Popul Vuh* says, about the origin of the Quiché priests, that their forefathers multiplied in the East, in a distant part of the world:

“They ... multiplied there in the East ... All lived together, they existed in great number and walked there in the East ... There they were then, in great number, the black men and the white men, men of many classes, men of many tongues ... The speech of all was the same. They did not invoke wood nor stone, and they remembered the word of the Creator and the Maker ... And they raised their prayers, those worshipers of the word [of God], loving, obedient and fearful, raising their faces to the sky... ”⁵

Also, the Maya believed their civilization was planted by a king from the East whom they called Kukulkan, Votan or Nacxit. Their legends suggest that their civilization started as a colony of people from the East. According to the *Popul*

Vuh, the leading class of the Quiche-kingdom returned to this colony after a long journey over sea:

“And then the sons remembered what had been said about the east. This is when they remembered the instructions of their fathers. The ancient things received from their fathers were not lost ... Three of them said as they began to depart: ‘We are going to the east, where our fathers came from,’ they said, then they followed their road ... So these are the ones who went across the sea. There were only three who went, but they had skill and knowledge. They were more than humans. They advised all their brothers, elder and younger who were left behind. They were glad to go: ‘We are not dying, we are coming back’, they said when they went clear across the sea. And then they arrived in the east, to acquire lordship ... And they came before the Lord named Nacxit, great lord and sole judge over a populous domain.”⁵

This idea of being a colony planted by a king in the East who left their nation after he founded it is a common belief among American populations. The Incas call the founder of their civilization Viracocha; the Hopi call him Pahana, the Aztecs call him Quetzalcoatl.⁶ The belief in Quetzalcoatl as their founder was so strong that Montezuma, the Aztec leader, thought the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés was the returning Quetzalcoatl, coming to end their civilization.

The fact that so many American traditions have this common ground should make it interesting to search the origins of Amerindians not only in Asia, but also in the east—in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa.



Figure 2. The manuscript of Francisco Ximénez (c. 1701) is the oldest written account of the *Popul Vuh* (Book of the People). It is mostly written in parallel K'iche' language and Spanish.

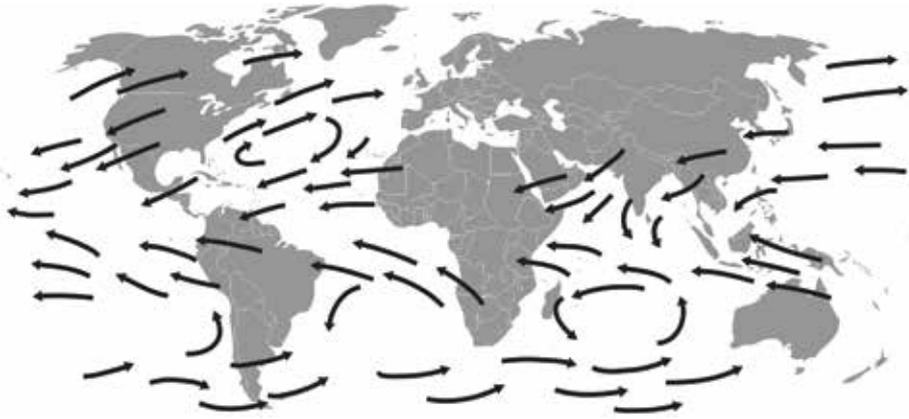


Figure 3. The Phoenicians may have accidentally discovered the Americas through the prevailing trade winds.

Indications of trans-Atlantic contact

Could the ancestors of the Mesoamerican people have their roots in the Old World? Evolution-biased scientists tend to believe this could not be the case. According to the modernistic view on life, ancient men were far too primitive to take journeys across the Atlantic Ocean. However, this view could well be questioned. If ancient ships from the Old World moved too far on the Atlantic Ocean, they would have been captured by the trade winds (figure 3). In fact, these strong winds would bring sailors directly to South America. Therefore, if it were the fact that ancient European sailors had reached the Americas alive, their discovery would be an accident, rather than a demonstration of great technical skills.

Interestingly, the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus mentioned that the Phoenicians, famous for their unquenchable desire to explore the earth for trade, discovered an island far off the coast of Africa and Gibraltar, being mountainous and fruitful, with navigable rivers flowing through it. The latter statement is remarkable, because there are no rivers in the islands of Madeira, the Azores or the Canaries. The land had ‘remained undiscovered because of its distance from the entire inhabited world.’ The Phoenicians discovered this place by accident. Diodorus says:

“The Phoenicians, then, while exploring the coast outside the Pillars for the reasons we have stated and while sailing along the shore of Libya (Africa), were driven by strong winds a great distance out into the ocean. And after being storm-tossed for many days they were carried ashore on the island we mentioned above ...”⁷

We don’t know if this newly discovered land would have been the American continent, but there are indications to support this idea. In 1874 an inscription was found in Brazil called the ‘Paraíba Stone’ (figure 4). At the time of the finding it was labeled a forgery because of its

controversial character. In 1968, Cyrus H. Gordon, an American scholar of Near Eastern cultures and ancient languages, examined the inscription again and became convinced of its authenticity. Gordon translated the inscription as follows:

“We are Sons of Canaan from Sidon, from the city where the merchant (prince) has been made king. He dispatched us to this distant island, a land of mountains. We sacrificed a youth to the celestial gods and goddesses in the nineteenth year of Hiram,

our King. Abra! We sailed from Ezion-Geber into the Red Sea and voyaged with ten ships. We were at sea together for two years around Africa. Then we got separated by a storm (literally: the hand of Baal) and we were no longer with our companions. So we have come here with twelve men and three women, into one island, unpopulated because ten died. Abra! May the celestial gods and goddesses favor us!”⁸

The Paraíba Stone might tell the other part of Diodorus’s story. Could the Phoenicians have arrived the Americas by accident? This idea may sound incredible, but given the fact that the same Phoenicians travelled around Africa, which is a journey of more than 12,000 km (7,500 miles), it is a realistic possibility.⁹ Brazil is less than 4,000 km (2,500 miles) from Gibraltar.

Ironically, the land of Brazil was officially discovered in the year 1500 by the Portuguese explorer Pedro Álvares Cabral— by accident. He was on his way from Portugal to India and moved too far to the west while travelling along the African coast. The trade winds brought him to Brazil. Likewise, the first Phoenician travelers may have accidentally arrived in the New World exploring the African coast.

Physical evidence

King Hiram, mentioned on the Paraíba Stone, was a contemporary of king Solomon of Israel and reigned from 980 to 947 BC. His navy made journeys which took three and a half years, bringing back all kinds of exotic merchandise and woods that were entirely unknown.¹⁰ If the Phoenicians really travelled the Americas, they may have also founded colonies on the American continent, like they did on countless places in the Old World.

The above findings may not offer unequivocal evidence of transatlantic contact, but they certainly indicate that the Americas may have been reached by travellers from

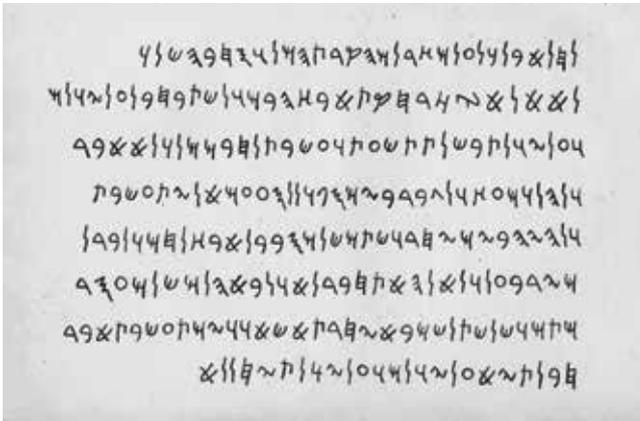


Figure 4. Alleged Phoenician inscriptions on the Paraíba Stone describing an unplanned voyage to the Americas.

the Old World long before Columbus. The common testimony of aboriginal American populations on their ancestors invading the new continent from the East may be a faded memory of real voyages from the Old World to the Americas. This implies that the origins of American populations should not only be sought in Asia, but also in Europe, the Middle-East and North Africa.

Genetic evidence for non-Asian migrations

If there ever was a pre-Columbian migration of humans from Europe or the Middle-east to the Americas, we should be able to find genetic evidence within the genomes of Amerindians. We realize that genetic evidence obtained from modern Amerindian populations may be explained by more recent hybridizations and admixture of European and/or African immigrants. However, this drawback can be overcome by studying ancient mitochondrial (mt)DNA sequences of Amerindians that lived and died before the American continent was overflowed by immigrants from the East. In 2004, Moraga and co-workers of the University of Chile, Santiago, reported on ancient mtDNA isolated from the remnants of prehistoric, pre-Columbian Amerindian populations of the Andes. They studied chronological changes of ancient mtDNA haplotype frequencies. From a total of 97 samples from 83 individuals, 68 samples from 61 individuals yielded amplification for a fragment that harbour classical mtDNA markers. First of all, they showed that the four classical Amerindian haplotypes are present in the ancient pre-Columbian populations designated A (26.2%), B (34.4%), C (14.8%) and D (3.3%) (table 1). In addition to the classical haplogroups, they found a high percentage of non-classical haplogroups (21.3%).¹¹ The authors write:

“The high frequency of individuals who do not belong to the classical Amerindian haplogroups (21.3%) is noteworthy. Obviously one explanation is contamination from recent sources such as

genomic DNA, PCR products, or even DNA from researchers who were in contact with the specimens. The precautions taken with respect to these issues (see Material and Methods) make this explanation unlikely. Moreover, only one of us (M.M.) was in direct contact with the samples. He belongs to haplogroup C, and its HVR I sequence is different from the sequences obtained for the two specimens classified as C. Another possibility is that one or more nucleotides changes are due to postmortem damage (Gilbert *et al.*, 2003a,b). Although this explanation undoubtedly has a chance of being true, changes must perform also have occurred in the D-loop region, because the four samples for which we have HVR I sequences do not present the characteristic transitions associated with the four classical Amerindian haplogroups. Furthermore, the sequence data obtained for control region I for four of the individuals lacking the classical haplogroups did not reveal the polymorphisms frequently associated with them, confirming the results obtained by PCR-RFLP. The fact that these four lineages present different changes in control region I lets us suggest that these may be Native American haplogroups that were possibly infrequent in the past and that vanished as a consequence of stochastic events associated with population bottlenecks that occurred during the European conquest.”¹¹

The mtDNA of prehistoric Amerindians of the Andes clearly demonstrates a high frequency of non-classical haplogroups (A–D), which can certainly be interpreted as the fingerprint of non-Asian migrations. Unfortunately, the authors did not further elaborate on the origin of these ‘alien’ haplogroups, but rather chose to explain away these interesting findings—since the data point to the East, i.e. Europa and Africa. It is also of note that additional studies confirm non-A–D haplogroups in prehistoric Amerindian populations of South America. Ribeiro-dos-Santos reported 38.9% non-classical Amerindian haplogroups in 18 Amazonian skeletal remains,¹² while Lalueza¹³ reported one non-Amerindian haplogroup in Fuego-Patagonian skeletal

Table 1. The haplogroup distribution among ancient pre-Columbian mtDNA samples of 61 individuals demonstrates 21.3% of non-classical Amerindian haplogroups (from Moraga *et al.*, ref. 11).

Haplogroup	Percentage
A	26.2
B	34.4
C	14.8
D	3.3
Non-classical Amerindian	21.3

remains. Furthermore, possible non-classical Amerindian haplogroups were reported in aboriginal extant populations by Bailliet,¹⁴ Easton,¹⁵ and Ribeiro-dos-Santos.¹⁶

Haplotype X

Another remarkable finding is the origin of the mtDNA haplotype X in modern Amerindian populations. It should be noted that haplotype X is a typifying genetic marker present in Europe, the Middle-East and the northern parts of continental Africa (2%). In addition, the subgroup X1 is restricted to North- and East-Africa, whereas subgroup X2 can be found in the Middle-East, the Caucasus, the Mediterranean, Israel, and mainland Europe. Also, subgroup X2 can be found in the Druze people that live in Israel (26%) and in inhabitants of the northern parts of the Scottish Orkney Islands (7%).¹⁷ These remarkable mtDNA marks, which are present on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, may therefore be the genetic echo of ancient migratory routes and compelling evidence of the historicity of many mythical accounts and recordings.

Conclusions

From the presented evidence, both historical and biomolecular, we conclude that the origin of Amerindians cannot only be found in migrations out of Asia. According to Mayan, Toltec and Aztec tradition and history, their forefathers came from the East. We cannot ignore the resemblance between the propagated histories in the Old World and the New World. Neither can we ignore the genetic evidence of such migratory events. In the teaching of the evolutionary model, where ancient man is just a primitive stone tool maker, Amerindians originated solely from Asian populations that colonized the Americas via the Bering Strait. The histories of the Amerindians themselves provide compelling evidence for the biblical view of their origin in the Middle East and subsequent dispersal after the divine intervention at Babel. This view is supported by modern molecular biological evidence from mtDNA haplogroup analyses.

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