

Charles W. Petit
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Dear Mr.. Petit:

I found your article and the box summary on the First Americans to be, on the whole, informative and reasonably accurate. But I do have a few comments.

First, the cover title "America Before the Indians" is inflammatory and an absurdity. The only Indians (properly) are the people of India and the almost 2 million Indians (from India) now living in the USA and Caribbean.

So what does the cover really say?; "America Before the Americans" or "America Before the Original Americans" or "America Before the Indigenous Americans" - it doesn't make sense except as hyperbole.

The native people of this hemisphere have probably never been thought of as all being exactly alike or descended from a single set of ancestors by sophisticated students of ancient American history. If you will read my enclosed article on "Kennewick Man" you will see what I wrote back in 1967.

The idea that "Kennewick Man" resembles Ainu people is pretty doubtful, but also presupposes that Ainu people existed 9,000 years ago and that skeletal remains found somewhere in Asia both resemble Kennewick and that those remains were from people speaking an Ainu-related language. Perhaps very few, if any, of the world's existing ethnic populations were the same as today 9,000 years ago.

I've met quite a few Ainu people in Japan and seen illustrations of others, and the ones I've seen sometimes could pass for a modern-day Native American but most seem to resemble round-headed Native Californians more than a long-headed man like Kennewick. As I note in my article, I have seen a photo of a Nez Perce man from the 19th century who greatly resembles Kennewick.

But, in any case, the likelihood is that Native Americans have migrated over to Asia as well as, on occasion, to Europe. You seem to forget that Americans can travel just as well as Asiatics and Europeans, and, in fact, the winds and currents decidedly favor Americans reaching Europe in ancient times, rather than the reverse.

You apparently are unaware of the Americans having reached Iceland in about 9,000bp (as recently reported). There are also many reports of Americans reaching Europe prior to 1492 (about which I am writing a book).

We also find the Diego antigen (which is a circum-Caribbean characteristic) showing up rarely in coastal areas of Asia as well as more rarely in Europe. This clearly indicates that Americans did indeed travel elsewhere.

When the ice melted across North America in 13,000-10,000 years ago, the Americans were primarily living south of the ice, according to the linguistic studies of Johanna Nichols and archaeological evidence from Meso and South America. Only a relatively small number of people could have been living in Alaska or northeast Siberia. Thus as the ice melted, the major movement would have been northward and this is well-reflected by the expansion of the Tinneh-Athapaskan and Algonkian language groups northwards. Some people could have eventually crossed over into Asia, as is reflected by the spread of American point technology to Siberia at that time.

Native Americans are only now beginning to receive favorable treatment in the US after centuries of denigration. Thus it is very important to interview Native scholars when writing articles about our past, since there is an active anti-native tendency among some non-native writers.

Sincerely yours,

Jack D. Forbes
Professor