

BOOK REVIEWS

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The Origins of Native Americans: Evidence from Anthropological Genetics. By Michael H. Crawford. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Pp. 308. \$64.95.

Some 100 years after the initiation of the Jesup North Pacific Expeditions by Franz Boas to determine the population relationships across the Bering Strait, researchers in the field of biological anthropology continue to investigate the primary issues raised by these first studies of Native American origins—namely, the timing and process of New World colonization and the geographic location(s) from which ancestral Asian populations emerged. *The Origins of Native Americans* synthesizes much of the existing anthropological genetic data from New World populations, in an attempt to get closer to answering these longstanding and intriguing questions. Overall, this book provides a reasonably thorough review of most studies examining the genetic diversity of and evolutionary relationships among Native Americans, as well as their affinities with Asian and Siberian peoples. It focuses on five important aspects of the process of the peopling of the New World, including the genetic variation, demography, population structure, morphological variation, and health and disease of Native Americans past and present. In addition, the book devotes a fair amount of space to describing the postcontact hybridization of Native American groups with peoples of European and African ancestry, as well as to the implications that this trend has for attempts to reconstruct their population histories. The author also raises important concerns about the factors that shaped biological variation among Native Americans, issues that are sometimes omitted in discussions of the “waves” of ancestral Asian migrations into the Americas that occurred 15,000–30,000 years ago.

Two other features of this book add to its distinctive view of Native American origins. First, the author has been involved in studies of human biological variation for >20 years and has used many of the methods for analyzing morphological and genetic variation in human populations that are described in the text. As a consequence, the book takes a historical perspective on the methodological approaches used in studies of Native American origins and discusses the shifting understanding of population relationships that has resulted from these technological innovations. In addition, the use of the popu-

lations amongst whom the author has conducted field research as case studies adds an on-the-ground anthropological perspective to the patterns of genetic variation in Siberian and Native American groups which is sometimes lacking in similar publications dealing with these issues.

As much as this book contributes to the debate over Native American origins, it has a few minor shortcomings that will need to be supplemented by additional reading. First, since the book has a strong North and Central American focus with respect to Native American genetic variation, the reader will need to refer to other publications describing genetic data from South American Indian populations for comparative purposes. In addition, while giving an overview of the most recent molecular studies of Native American and aboriginal Siberians, the coverage of the mtDNA, Y-chromosome, and microsatellite data for these populations is not comprehensive. This is unfortunate because many of the same populations have also been analyzed for nuclear-genetic and morphological variation, and the wealth of molecular data that have accumulated during the past several years could have been compared in some very interesting ways with those of the classical anthropological genetic studies. Furthermore, the discussion of the phylogenetic methods used to ascertain genetic relationships among native populations from molecular data could have been expanded a bit, although the explication of the other analytical tools used to determine these kinds of genetic relationships is quite good, particularly the treatment of the statistic methods. Nevertheless, *The Origins of Native Americans* is an engaging, thoughtful, and sometimes contentious account of the population history of aboriginal groups from Siberia and the Americas based on anthropological genetic data.

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