Possible New World Affiliations of the Neolithic Baikal People

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Of the few well-documented archaeological skeletal series of Siberia, the Neolithic Baikal Type "A" population is of considerable interest because of its widespread ramifications in both Siberia and northwestern North America. This Neolithic population was first described by the Russian physical anthropologist, G. F. Debetz as a result of his examination of a series of skulls from the late neolithic of the Transbaikal region. It is apparent, as Debetz himself recognized, that this neolithic Siberian population resembles somewhat the contemporary Aleut. If the Pre-Aleuts are compared with the Baikal populations, however, the resemblances are even more striking.

The Neolithic Baikal population and the Pre-Aleuts share the following traits: the vault is absolutely long, narrow, and low, the forehead is very sloping, the brow-ridges are moderate in development, and the cranial index is dolichocranial. For both groups the face is typically long and moderately broad in its absolute dimensions; both populations are leptoprosopic, the upper facial index being mesene; the nasal index is leptorrhine and the orbital index is hypsiconch.

The later Aleut population differs from the Baikal people in being broader and shorter vaulted, the cranial index falling into the brachycranial index class. With reference to facial dimensions and profile, however, the present-day Aleut are skeletally still quite close to the Siberian group. The Eskimo also disclose a facial similarity close to the Neolithic Baikal population, but these resemblances are limited to the face. The Neolithic Baikal population is characterized by an extremely low mean cranial height which is apparently due to platybasia, while the Eskimo are one of the most high vaulted groups in North America. The great resemblance between the Neolithic Baikal population and the Pre-Aleut suggests that this Siberian group is directly ancestral not only to the Pre-Aleut but also to the Deneid variety.

Since the Neolithic Baikal population probably did not give rise to the Eskimo or Inuid variety, it is suggested that the common ancestral group to both of these populations is to be discovered among some yet unknown pre-neolithic mongoloid population of northern Siberia.

The distribution of the low-vaulted Baikal type in Siberia is very widespread and throws additional light on the problem of racial differentiation in both Siberia and North America. The Tungus of Northern Baikalia most nearly resemble the ancestral neolithic Baikal population, and are closely followed by the Lamut of northeastern Siberia. Brachycephalized descendants of the Baikal population occur also in Central Asia and can be considered to comprise the Evenkid variety. This variety is represented among the Buriats, Kelmyks, Mongols, Telengets, and Tuvinians, and in the Amur region among the Oroki, Orochi, and especially the Gilyaks. All these Evenkids share, along with the Aleut, and in general the Deneid variety, the following traits: the vault is broad and low in absolute dimensions, the cranial index being brachycranial in every case,

the forehead is typically less sloping and the brow-ridges less developed than among the neolithic Baikal population. All of the later groups enumerated share a number of facial resemblances, both in absolute dimensions and in indicial relationships. For all these groups the characteristic combination is hypsiconchy, meseny, and mesorrhiny.

In reconstructing the racial history of this branch of the Asiatic subspecies of man it is necessary to take into account not only craniological similarities but also somatological resemblances and differences. On the whole the groups which remained in Siberia, especially in Central Asia and the Amur, exhibit a greater degree of mongoloid specialization in their facial features, especially in the frequency of appearance of the epicanthic fold among these groups. On the other hand, the Aleut, and in general the Deneid variety, are more generalized, the faces of the living are less mongoloid-appearing and the epicanthic fold occurs less frequently than among the Asiatic branch of the Baikal stock.

The Deneids and Aleuts probably are more like the group which was ancestral to the Central Asiatic populations than are those populations themselves today. One has only to envisage this more conservative strain of the Baikal population wandering off to northwestern Canada, while other groups remained behind in Asia, eventually reaching Central Asia, the Amur and gradually filling up the vast expanse of the Siberian taiga, where they interbred with other mongoloid populations to give rise to many of the local types present in the anthropological composition of the peoples of northeastern Asia. Not all of those who remained behind in Asia became brachycephalized and acquired the broad, fat-padded faces typical of Buriats, Mongols, Gilyaks, etc. One such conservative group, which has preserved more or less unchanged the features of its ancestral neolithic Baikal stock are the present-day Tungus of Northern Baikalia. The extreme conservatism of this Tungusic group is revealed by the fact that they are today as close to the cranial type of the Pre-Aleuts as they are to the cranial type of the modern Aleut.

Within the Evenkid variety there are the conservative Tungus of Northern Baikalia on the one hand, and on the other, the more specialized Mongols, Buriats, Telengets, Tuvinians, and Kalmyks, in addition to the Gilyaks. The great similarity between the members of the Evenkid variety in Siberia and the Pre-Aleuts and Deneids in North America suggests that all three of these groups are directly related to the neolithic Type "A" population of Baikalia.

The question now remains: What of the relationship between the physical type of the Eskimo and that of the Neolithic Baikal people? In the case of the Pre-Aleut to Aleut sequence, it has been shown that the earlier Pre-Aleut population, which is closer in time to the neolithic Baikal population, is also anthropologically closer to the Siberian population. If the Eskimo are to be derived from this Siberian group, then it is to be expected that an early Eskimo group should exhibit similarities with the supposedly ancestral Siberian population.

A comparison of the Old Igloo series of Eskimo crania with those of the Baikal type shows that the Eskimo group differs considerably from the Siberian group in the following traits:

The vault of the Eskimo series is typically much higher and narrower, the cranial index is more dolichocranic, the total facial breadth exceeds that of the Siberian series, and the forehead is less sloping. In general the few resemblances between this ancient Eskimo population from western Alaska and the Siberian neolithic Baikal population are no greater than the difference between the Contemporary Greenland Eskimo and the neolithic Baikal people. Not only does the Inuid variety differ from the neolithic Baikal population, but they also differ markedly from the Pre-Aleuts, Aleuts, Deneids, and Evenkids of Siberia. The typological evidence suggests that the Pre-Aleut and Eskimo populations of the New World represent two distinct population movements to North America and that the differentiation between the Pre-Aleut and Inuid stock took place in northern Siberia, probably long before either group migrated across Bering Strait.