Terminal Pleistocene human skeleton from Hang Cho Cave, northern Vietnam: implications for the biological affinities of Hoabinhian people

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Abstract: An excavation at the cave site of Hang Cho in northern Vietnam resulted in the discovery of a terminal Pleistocene human skeleton in a relatively good state of preservation. The material culture from this site belongs to the pre-ceramic Hoabinhian period. An AMS radiocarbon date on a tooth sample extracted from this individual gives a calibrated age of 10450 ± 300 years BP. In discussions of the population history of Southeast Asia, it has been repeatedly advocated that Southeast Asia was occupied by indigenous people akin to present-day Australo-Melanesians prior to the Neolithic expansion of migrants from Northeast Asia into the area. Cranial and dental metric analyses were undertaken in order to assess the biological affinity of early settlers in this region. The results suggest that the Hang Cho skeleton, as well as other early or pre-Holocene remains in Southeast Asia, represent descendants of colonizing populations of late Pleistocene Sundaland, who may share a common ancestry with present-day Australian Aboriginal and Melanesian people.

Author Keywords: AMS dating; biological affinity; Hang Cho; Hoabinhian; Skeleton; Southeast Asia; Vietnam

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