iDINO

Investigation of Dinosaur Intact Natural Osteo-tissue

A CRS Research Initiative

# The iDINO Project

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Dinosaurs have long held a unique fascination for people. Speak to a group of elementary-age children, and you quickly learn that many of them can identify the common names for a number of the larger dinosaurs. Evolutionists have recognized the value of using this enthusiasm to effectively indoctrinate the public about evolution (e.g., the January 2015 issue of *Smithsonian* uses dinosaurs as part of their "evolution world tour" segment). Questions, such as how Noah could fit dinosaurs on the ark or why dinosaur fossils are not found mixed with human fossils, are often naively used to contradict both biblical and scientific arguments for a recent creation.

The Creation Research Society began its iDINO research initiative with the expressed purpose of addressing questions about dinosaurs from a creationist perspective. The primary focus of the project is to study soft tissue in dinosaur fossils (and subsequently other so-called ancient fossils). As explained by Thomas (2015), intact tissue, cells, and biomolecules have been reported in dinosaur fossils for several decades. Their presence presents a significant challenge to the assigned date of these fossils, which thus challenges the current evolutionary-biased standard dating methods.

Can tissue (aggregates of interconnected cells) retain its natural, flexible characteristics in so-called ancient fossils? Can cells within this tissue retain their structural integrity and morphology? Can biomolecules (such as protein and DNA) actually survive 60 million years inside a fossilized and buried bone? What is the natural process that enables such preservation?

Tissue containing fossils are not preserved in permafrost. In fact, fossils in Montana's Hell Creek Formation are potentially subjected to wide temperature fluctuations, which is certainly not

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conducive to biomolecule preservation. The *Triceratops* horn that was analyzed as part of the iDINO project (Armitage and Anderson, 2013; Armitage, 2015) was buried under no more than 30 cm of sandstone (from the top surface) with the base partially exposed. Such depth provides little thermal protection for the specimen.

While Dr. Mary Schweitzer's work was not the first to observe preserved tissue/cells in dinosaur fossils, her work drew widespread attention to their existence (Schweitzer et al., 2005, 2007). Understandably, many of her evolutionist peers recognized the possible consequences of her findings and reacted to protect the evolution model's need for long ages—regardless of the data. She acknowledged that one reviewer told her,

> He didn't care what the data said; he knew that what I was finding wasn't possible. I wrote back and said, "Well, what data would convince you?" And he said, "None." (Yeoman, 2006)

Geochemist, Jeffrey Bada, insists that tissue/cells could not possibly survive millions of years.

> He says the cellular material Schweitzer found must be contamination from outside sources. Even if the *T. rex* had died in a colder, drier climate than Hell Creek, environmental radiation would have degraded its body, Bada says: "Bones absorb uranium and thorium like crazy. You've got an internal dose that will wipe out biomolecules." (Yeoman, 2006)

Thus, since we "know" these fossils are 60, 70, or 80 million years of age, the environmental radiation would destroy all original tissue and biomolecules. Whatever Dr. Schweitzer's group is detecting, Dr. Bada would conclude it cannot possibly be original dinosaur tissue. Yet, biostatistician Martin McIntosh admits that he "cannot right now make a plausible argument" that it is not original dinosaur tissue, and he acknowledges that "the door is closing on plausible alternatives" (Service, 2009, p. 578).

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Hence, this becomes the dilemma for paleontologists. Dr. Bada is factually correct. Regardless of any other environmental conditions that would affect tissue preservation, environmental radiation will always be a significant factor. For the tissue to be original, the fossils cannot be millions of years old. So, is the tissue original?

Dr. Schweitzer and her team detected pliable forms of tissue containing morphologically detailed cells (Schweitzer et al., 2005, 2009, 2013). Armitage and Anderson (2013) also observed similar tissue with morphologically detailed cells. Is the detection of such cellular detail a microscopic error? Is such pliable tissue the result of a biofilm contamination (Anderson, 2015) or other forms of contamination?

Asara et al. (2007) detected collagen amino acid sequences from a *T. rex* fossil dated at 68 million years. Working independently, Bern et al. (2009) analytically confirmed the presence of avian-type proteins in the same *T. rex* fossils. However, instead of suggesting these were original *T. rex* proteins, Bern and coworkers offer alternative explanations. These alternatives include suggestions that cosmetics accidently contaminated the samples, traces of ostrich bone proteins lingered in the mass spectrometer, or "a bird died on top of the *T. rex* excavation" site (Bern et al., 2009, p. 4331). Are they suggesting all dinosaur specimens have been contaminated with cosmetics or that all the mass spectrometers retained traces of avian samples? Does collagen detected in fossils of *Brachylophosaurus* (Schweitzer, et al. 2009) suggest a bird also died on this excavation site?

The extremity of these suggestions (even willingness to assume poor lab technique) demonstrates that the evolution paradigm provides fertile grounds to eagerly consider virtually any idea other than dinosaur fossils are "young." In other words, there *has* to be alternative explanations. If these alternatives help support standard evolutionary teaching, many will willingly consider them, no matter how silly or embarrassing.

Creationists would argue that a far more scientifically consistent interpretation is that these fossils are simply a few thousand years old. In fact, even evolutionists see the logical consistency of this interpretation. Dr. Schweitzer admits that when she first discovered the soft-tissue, her graduate advisor, professor Jack Horner, warned that "the creationists are just going to love you" (Ruppel, 2014). Yet, Schweitzer is very dismissive of creationists using the soft-tissue data. She laments that creationists have a "misunderstanding of what is

science" and are "trying to rewrite the rules of science" (Healy, 2009). She has expressed annoyance "that young earth creationists take my research and use it for their own message, and they are misleading people about it" (Ruppel, 2014).

Apparently, when creationists use any data to support their position, it is rewriting "the rules." These "rules" presumably are that all data must be viewed within an evolutionary context. Since many evolutionists see the logical consistency that this soft-tissue indicates a younger age for the fossils (hence, the resistance that Dr. Schweitzer has encountered regarding her findings), her dismissal of the creationists' view is both emotional and illogical. She even admits that "it's not surprising" that creationists have drawn these conclusions (Ruppel, 2014). Nor should it be surprising. Such conclusions are obvious—soft tissue and biomolecules degrade long before a fossil becomes 65 million years of age (Thomas, 2015; Demassa and Boudreaux, 2015).

Jack Horner notes that when he first met Mary Schweitzer, she was a young-earth creationist (Horner and Gorman, 2009). It would appear she was not very educated in the science of creation and thus rather easily swayed by evolutionary teachings once she entered college. Regrettably, this is a rather common situation. Lack of adequate understanding of both the biblical and scientific foundation for a recent and direct creation makes young people very vulnerable to the indoctrinations they receive in their college classes. Once indoctrinated, as was the situation for Dr. Schweitzer, the individual frequently becomes rather belligerent to any creationist teaching or argument. Perhaps this is because they now feel embarrassed they had once accepted creation, or because they feel compelled to correct those ignorant enough to have not "seen the light" as they have now.

What is clear is that their early understanding of creation science (and the Bible?) was incomplete and frequently rather naive. Their understanding may have been based upon some generalized or overly simplistic book (of which there are far too many). The consequence though, is the assumption that they understood creation. Thus, when they failed to answer questions raised in college classes, they mistakenly assumed that the questions were unanswerable. They also assumed that the answers given by the professors were not flawed as well (a rather erroneous assumption). Hence, they concluded that evolution and great ages for the earth are scientifically verified, and feeble little creation science is nothing more than a few superficial ideas and numerous misnomers from misguided Bible thumpers.

With this mindset, these "former creationists" now assume they have a full understanding of the creation model and thus have no reason for further study. As a consequence, they typically are blind to any argument for creation or even any criticism of evolution. This blindness pushes them forward in their evolutionary thinking, ignoring obvious biblical and scientific contradictions.

Self-described "former creationist" Denis Lamoureux claims to accept biblical teachings yet argues that the Bible "makes statements about how God created living organisms that in fact never happened" (Lamoureux, 2013, p. 56). He further states that "real history in the Bible begins roughly around Genesis 12" (Lamoureux, 2013, p. 44) and admits that he takes "a very counterintuitive way to read scripture" (Lamoureux, 2013, p. 63). Dr. Laumoureux is forced to these conclusions as a means of reconciling obvious biblical inconsistencies with evolution (e.g., creation in six solar days, Adam and Eve as the first humans, the creation of plants before the sun, etc.).

Such an unfortunate perspective undermines any and all biblical authority. If neither Adam nor Noah (Gen. 1, 7) really existed, how does Dr. Lamoureux know that Abraham or Jacob existed? What is his basis for this distinction? How does he know if Jesus' instantaneous calming of the sea or even His resurrection also "never happened"? After all, both these supernatural events clearly contradict contemporary scientific knowledge: Stormy seas cannot instantaneously become calm, and dead bodies cannot suddenly come back to life. Yet, this is the very "science" he uses to justify that the Bible makes statements about creation that never happened.

So enamored with the Darwinian doctrine he was taught in college, Karl Giberson reflects upon how his "fundamentalism" was eroded by the "acid" of evolution (Giberson, 2008). He admits this "acid dissolved Adam and Eve; it ate through the Garden of Eden; it destroyed the historicity of the events of creation week" (Giberson, 2008. p. 10). Dr. Giberson poses many questions about the historical place for Adam and Eve and how to reinterpret the creation week. However, he offers neither clear answers nor biblically consistent thoughts on these matters. His so-called "scientific knowledge" simply forces him to reject biblical teachings that do not readily fit within his evolutionary worldview. The shreds of the biblical record that remain after his "acid test" are somehow still supposed to be the viable and authoritative Word of God.

Unwavering allegiance to Darwinism also requires straining the biblical doctrines of sin and the Fall. This is exemplified by a Biologos essay that attempts to explain the origin of sin within the context of human evolution. Rather than being the first humans to sin (Romans 5:12–14; 1 Timothy 2:14), the biblical Adam and Eve are relegated to a role of "representing 'everyperson'—that is, each one of us" (Davis and Collins, 2014). Eve, the "mother of all" humans (Genesis 3:20) is apparently not the mother of anyone. The spiritual separation resulting from "the fall," as explained in Genesis 3:13–19 and Romans

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5:12–19, does not start with the single action of Adam. Rather, this separation is reduced to a "sedimentation of thousands of years of human choices of evil" (Davis and Collins, 2014). Readers can draw their own conclusions about the biblical impact this interpretation has on sin and redemption.

If biblical creationists state a position that evolution is not consistent with the Bible, it is because of failed attempts, such as those of Dr. Lamoureux and Biologos, to reconcile the two positions. This failure clearly illustrates the conflict. As Dr. Lamoureux admits, it takes a "counterintuitive" interpretation of the Bible to arrive at his position. Why? Because what the Bible clearly teaches (e.g., six-day creation, creation of Adam and Eve, creation of the earth before the sun, etc.), simply will not fit into his paradigm. Why does he hold to this paradigm, despite its biblical conflicts? Good question.

During the twentieth century, evolutionists were successful at equating evolution with science. This interchange of words has been used to twist the conflict into "creation versus science" rather than "creation versus evolution." By this mere rewording, creation is then cast as an opposing outsider of science. Since science is viewed as an objective analysis and understanding of information, creation (and consequently the Bible?) is automatically marginalized as a subjective "nonscience" and effectively reduced to virtual irrelevance. Simply by playing such word games, the debate is considered over. Apparently, for many, such as Dr. Lamoureux, this means the Bible must either bend to the demands of evolution (i.e., his version of science) or break in the process.

How, then, are we to view this perception? First, it is important to recognize that evolution is *not* equivalent to science. Science is a tool. Evolution is a perspective. At best, evolution is a human interpretation of data obtained from scientific methods. This is clearly not a situation of identifying evolution as being the same as science. Methods of experimental testing are not the same as the human interpretation of the test results. It is not "creation versus science"; rather, it is creation versus human opinion (and all the bias and emotion that entails). Word games to interchange evolution and science do nothing to clarify the boundaries of each. Rather, such word games appear to be intended to confuse, giving evolution a legitimacy it does not deserve and an authority it has never earned.

This returns us to the original question regarding proper interpretation of scientific data. In contemporary studies of science, evolution is simply assumed to be true. This assumption is then used to interpret all experimental results and data (Anderson, 2012). Assigning ages in the millions of years to fossils is less an empirical conclusion than it is a presupposition. Evolution requires vast geologic ages. Thus, geologists are trained to use this presupposition of geologic ages as a template rather than an idea to test or demonstrate (Reed, 2013). Rocks and fossils are interpreted based upon this template, and then the interpretation is declared a proof for evolution. The circularity is evident and has been repeatedly challenged by creationists.

In fact, not only is the presupposition of evolution the standard for all data interpretation, but it must be a specific version of neo-Darwinism. Just accepting materialistic evolution is not enough. Even several prominent evolutionists recently complained that they are having difficulty publishing ideas that are not fully in line with standard neo-Darwinian teaching (Laland et al., 2014). They lament that their views of nonrandom variation evoke "an emotional, even hostile, reaction among evolutionary biologists" (Laland et al., 2014, p. 162). Creationists would suggest that this all sounds very familiar. Interpretations that deviate too far from the standard evolution paradigm are simply not acceptable.

How should preserved "biomolecule-containing soft tissue" in dinosaur fossils be interpreted? First, it is important to ignore the presupposition of ancient ages. This presupposition offers no scientific insight and serves no productive purpose. Removing any unnecessary presuppositions now frees us to consider the most consistent and viable interpretation, regardless of whether it aligns with specific popular worldviews. Follow the data where it takes us. Is not that supposed to be the objective of scientific inquiry?

Therefore, discovery of this preserved tissue has three possible general interpretations: (1) the material is original tissue that was preserved for millions of years by some physical process; (2) the material is original tissue that required no special preservation because the fossil is only a few thousand years of age; or (3) the material is not original tissue but is the product of a microbial biofilm or other contaminating processes that mimic biomolecule-containing tissue.

If the soft tissue is original, then a very plausible interpretation is that these dinosaur fossils are actually young (i.e., no more than a few thousand years of age). This younger age contradicts the standard dating methodology used

to originally establish the fossils' ages as more than 65 million years. Such contradiction draws the entire geological dating paradigm into question and further exposes the error of accepting evolution as a presupposition for the dating paradigm.

The following articles in this special iDINO issue will seek to address the adequacy of each of these possible interpretations. While none of these articles are offered as a "final word" on these topics, they are intended to provide a detailed and reasoned analysis of each interpretation. Readers can judge for themselves which interpretation is the more consistent and valid, but I challenge that when evolutionary presuppositions are ignored, a recent creation stands as a very strong and viable interpretation of the soft-tissue data.

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