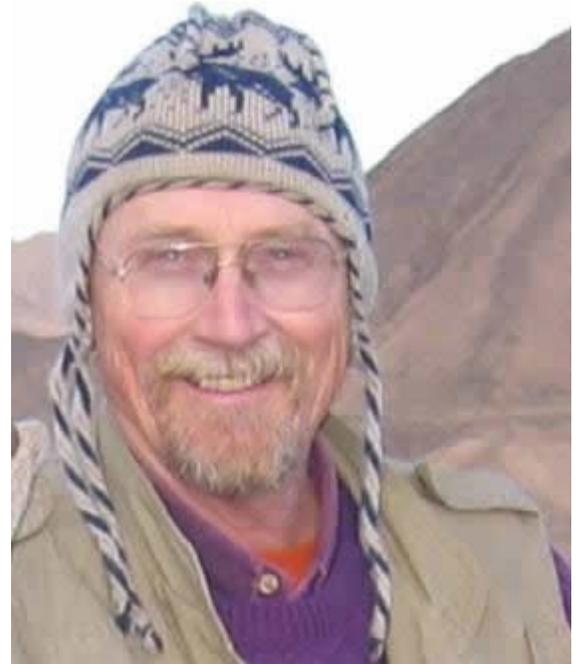


Timing of the Initial Human Occupation of the Tibetan Plateau: Archaeological and Genetic

Presented by **Dr. David Madsen**,
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Genetically based estimates for the appearance of adaptive mutations to high altitudes among Tibetan populations range from ~30,000 to 3000 years ago. Archaeological estimates for the initial occupation of the high Tibetan Plateau (TP) are similarly diverse, ranging from before the last glacial period to the mid-Holocene. Resolving these various estimates has been one of the central goals of the Tibet Paleolithic Project, a joint Sino-American project of the last decade focused on the Amdo region of northeastern Tibet. While the issue is not yet fully resolved, our work has made it clear that the two data sets may not be directly comparable. Our work suggests that small, specialized groups of foragers began to seasonally occupy the TP margins above 2500 m by ~15 ka and occupied the edges of the high plateau above 4000 m by ~11 ka. Larger family groups were living on the TP margins above 3000 m by ~8 ka and likely occupied the higher regions shortly thereafter. We suggest this more permanent occupation of the high plateau may be related to the domestication of the yak.

2:00—3:30pm • Friday, November 15, 2013
Simmons Hall, Room 144



Survey camp at 5000 m below the Kunlun Mt. glaciers.

David Madsen is an anthropological archaeologist and paleoecologist whose primary research interest is human adaptation to environmental change. He has worked extensively in the Great Basin and Colorado Plateau areas of the western U.S., focusing on Holocene climate change and its impacts on small-scale foraging societies. For the last twenty-five years, this research has taken him to northwestern China and Tibet, where the interior continental, mid-latitude morphology of high mountains draining into closed-basin lake systems provides an environmentally similar, but culturally historically distinct, region with which Great Basin foraging adaptations can be compared. Now, semi-retired, he continues to work in the deserts and mountains of Central Asia, and holds adjunct positions at a number of Texas universities.