



2023

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Recommended Citation

Fields, Ryan; LePore, Caleb; and McLain, Matthew A. (2023) "Noah's Arks and Viking Funeral Ships: A Creationist Look at the Biogeographic Patterns of Tetrapods in the Collisions of South America/North America and India/Asia," *Proceedings of the International Conference on Creationism*: Vol. 9, Article 54. DOI: 10.15385/jpicc.2023.9.1.50

Available at: https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/icc_proceedings/vol9/iss1/54

NOAH'S ARKS AND VIKING FUNERAL SHIPS: A CREATIONIST LOOK AT THE BIOGEOGRAPHIC PATTERNS OF TETRAPODS IN THE COLLISIONS OF SOUTH AMERICA/NORTH AMERICA AND INDIA/ASIA

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ABSTRACT

The question of how animals recolonized the earth after the Flood has been of interest to creation scientists for hundreds of years, and this inquiry led to the birth of the field of biogeography. Biogeographers recognize dispersal mechanisms (e.g., rafting) as well as vicariant mechanisms (e.g., continental drift). In biogeography, a continent carrying animals from one place to another is called a "Noah's Ark." There are two continents that start the Cenozoic as islands but later collide with other land masses: India with Asia (in the Eocene) and South America with North America (in the Pliocene). The faunal transfer between North and South America across the isthmus of Panama, called the Great American Biotic Interchange (GABI), is well documented, but the India/Asia transfer has received less attention. From a conventional perspective, both South America and India should be "Noah's Arks" resulting in faunal interchanges when they collide with their respective land masses. However, if the Flood deposited nearly all the Phanerozoic layers, then both South America and India should be colliding during the Flood, so they would not be "Noah's Arks" but "Viking Funeral Ships," carrying only dead land animals on their respective continents. A third option, with a Flood/post-Flood boundary at the Cretaceous-Paleogene boundary, would recognize South America as a "Noah's Ark" and India as a "Viking Funeral Ship." We determined to investigate the vertebrate paleontological record of North America/South America and India/Asia across the timing of their respective collisions using data from the Paleobiology Database to evaluate between the three different hypotheses.

We found strong evidence for a faunal exchange between South America and North America across the Pliocene, agreeing with the hypothesis that South America was a "Noah's Ark." However, we found very little evidence for animals crossing from India into Asia in the Paleocene-Eocene, but abundant examples from Asia into India, suggesting India was a "Viking Funeral Ship." Thus, we find that the paleontological record of these collisions best supports a K-Pg Flood/post-Flood boundary rather than the conventional model or a late Flood/post-Flood boundary.

KEYWORDS

Biogeography, South America, India, Great American Biotic Interchange, Flood/post-Flood boundary, paleontology

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