

SKEPTICS WEIGH IN ON MEXICAN FOOTPRINTS

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Listeros,

In an article at National Geographic about the new finds concerning the claimed 40,000 year old footprints in Mexico, archaeologists expressed some skepticism about the new finds. Here are their comments;

"I am amazed that they are still flogging that dead horse," said Paul Renne, of the University of California, Berkeley's Geochronology Center. Renne led that team that initially dated the Valsequillo Basin strata.

"We are about to publish even more data showing that the rocks are 1.3 million years old and that the 'footprints' are not," he said by e-mail.

Rafael Suárez of the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural y Antropología in Montevideo, Uruguay, is more cautious but also dubious.

"Very old human occupation of the Americas is possible," he said, "but if there were indeed people here that long ago, what happened to them in the next 25,000 years?"

"In this time, surely the population should have increased, and this would bring the presence of a high quantity of sites 16,000 to 20,000 years old," he said by email.

James Dunbar, an archaeologist at Florida's Bureau of Archaeological Research in Tallahassee cautions that carbon-14 dating in the 40,000-year age range is often suspect, because the samples might include "dead carbon," or carbon not originally from living organisms.

Dunbar is impressed, though, by the digital laser imaging system used in scanning the footprints.

That method, he said by email, is a "very sophisticated way & to help see features that are sometimes not detectable to the human eye."

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<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2008/06/080606-ancient-footprints.html>

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