Bones, Boats and Bison: Archeology and the First Colonization of Western North America & An Early Paleo-Indian Site Near Parkhill, Ontario. (Book Review Essay)

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Main content

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In a way, the two rich volumes reviewed here come close to being the yin and yang of Paleoindian studies. Only after I finished reading E. James Dixon's book did I realize it was not titled "Archeology of the First Colonization of Western North America." The actual title is more accurate as the archaeology and physical anthropology on which Dixon's advocacy of early colonization of the entire Hemisphere is based is predominantly conjunctive, partly conjectural, and only partially Western.

Dixon opens with a precis of Paleoindian research in the western U.S. This is followed by a weak review of the kinds of evidence and the rules for its use in building theories for and against various New World human migration routes. Dixon then provides a synopsis of virtually every presumed pre-Clovis site across the northern and southern New World continents. The descriptions are clear and relevant although there are few telling new arguments against accepting a site's data or its excavators' interpretations. Less useful is Dixon's unweighted four-way test for rating the relative acceptability of each site as pre-Clovis. Treading lightly through the academic and political minefields, Dixon then reviews the surprisingly plentiful biophysical evidence available. This is followed by a chapter in which Dixon builds his scenario for the...

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