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**Review of *The Settlement of the American Continents: A
Multidisciplinary Approach to Human Biogeography* Edited by C.
Michael Barton, Geoffrey A. Clark, David R. Yesner, and Georges A.
Pearson**

Steven Holen

Denver Museum of Nature and Science

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The Settlement of the American Continents: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Human Biogeography.

Edited by C. Michael Barton, Geoffrey A. Clark, David R. Yesner, and Georges A. Pearson. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004. vi + 281 pp. Maps, tables, figures, notes, bibliography, index. \$75.00 cloth.

Organized into three sections—"The First Settlers," "The Trail to the Americas," and "The Land and People Transformed"—*The Settlement of the American Continents: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Human Biogeography* is one of the latest edited volumes on the subject of the peopling of the Americas. Between the editors' introduction and closing, chapters by a number of authors offer diverse views of the early peopling event from the disciplines of physical anthropology, linguistics, genetics, ecological anthropology/archaeology, and paleontology. The volume is well edited, containing copious notes and a good bibliography.

The editors have brought together a welcome mix of different perspectives on the subject, including an unusual post-processual analysis of the ice-free corridor migration route as well as a feminist critique. To their credit, the male editors have addressed one important aspect of that critique by including the work of six women authors.

This collection differs from former volumes on the early peopling of the Americas because its editors and most of its authors rely on a biogeographical approach that concentrates on presenting models of how the first colonization occurred and of the human adaptations to diverse ecological situations that followed. They explicitly do not

rely on site-specific interpretations of when the Americas were first settled that tend to advocate one temporal model of colonization over another. Moreover, they present a strong critique of past and present conceptual approaches as not being well developed or theoretically sound.

There is a refreshing lack of rancorous debate over the timing of the first human entry into what is now North America. However, the editors' biases creep into the concluding chapter as they generally support a late human entry, downplaying the importance of any potential "pre-Clovis" occupation. This position is problematic because the Clovis technocomplex may have arisen from a small resident population in North America representing a much earlier migration. The consideration of an earlier population is therefore potentially critical to our understanding of Clovis origins, expansion, and adaptation.

Although the volume contains no extended discussion of the early peopling of the Great Plains, research and references to human adaptation to the Plains are used as supporting data in several chapters, and scientists studying the region will find useful information and interpretations throughout the book.

Overall, *The Settlement of the American Continents* presents a balanced approach and represents the most multidisciplinary and ecologically-oriented volume on the subject to date. A mind open to new ways of interpreting the first peopling of the Americas is essential to appreciating the volume, and readers should be prepared to have their preconceptions challenged on several fronts. This excellent book belongs in the library of everyone interested in the early peopling of the Americas and the Great Plains, and in human migrations into new territories anywhere in the world. **Steven R. Holen**, *Department of Anthropology, Denver Museum of Nature and Science*.