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## V. Book/Journal Article Reviews

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*Quest for the Origins of the First Americans*, by E. James Dixon (1993). University of New Mexico Press,  
Albuquerque. 156 pages, xii, 44 illustrations and photographs. \$24.95.

by Todd W. Bostwick

In recent years, Paleoindian research has seen numerous advances in data, approaches and ideas. With each new book or article, a better understanding of the origins of the first Americans is gained. Yet, heated debate on the subject continues, and as researchers scrutinize new data, old approaches and models are re-evaluated. The history of Paleoindian research and the methodology of archaeological inquiry often are a part of the debate. Dixon's book is a welcome addition to this debate.

The three major themes of Dixon's book are outlined in the book's preface. The first theme is the documentation, synthesis, and interpretation of the early prehistory of the Western North American Arctic and Subarctic regions. The second theme is the process of scientific inquiry including the excitement of research and the social context of intellectual growth. This second theme has two components: (1) following established procedures of a discipline, and (2) the use of innovative new methods or discoveries. The third theme is the history of archaeology of Alaska. Dixon also notes in the preface that the book is directed to a broad and diverse audience, not just other archaeologists. This later comment is evident in Dixon's clear, relatively jargon free writing style. Although the book cover notes state that the book was written for a lay audience, there is much in the book that professional archaeologists as well can gain by reading the book.

Chapter One, *The Quest*, introduces the reader to Dixon's own involvement in the search for the origins of the first Americans and the history of previous investigations in the Alaska region. For example, Dixon discusses the work of Jesuit Priest Joseph De Acosta, who in 1589 proposed three hypotheses for the origins of Americans: (1) planned transoceanic voyages, (2) accidental oceanic voyages, and (3) migration via a land bridge. The third hypothesis is the most commonly accepted model today, but Dixon argues later in the book that the accidental oceanic voyages hypothesis should also be given serious consideration.

Chapter Two, *Paleoindians*, provides a summary of some of the major issues concerning the origins and characterization of Paleoindians. As Dixon points out, the colonization of the Americas represents the last major dispersal of human species on the planet. Therefore, the New World is an ideal fossil laboratory for understanding ourselves from an historical perspective.

Chapter Three, *Feast or Famine in Beringia*, looks at the available data for the prehistoric environment of Beringia. This chapter examines what Dixon calls the "productivity paradox," in which the region's environment appears to have been harsh and severe, yet large numbers of mammalian species apparently were present. Dixon argues that the direct historical approach, which has been used to locate potential early sites such as those ideal for fishing and caribou hunting, has overlooked possible bison predation site locations.

Chapter Four, *Artifact or Pseudofact*, discusses the problems with dating bone tools, especially those found in mixed or stratigraphically complex contexts. Also discussed are some of the advances of AMS dating of small bone samples, resulting in a few of the well-known older dates being revised upward.

Chapter Five, *The American Paleoarctic Tradition*, presents a history of research in the Arctic region and the definition of the Paleoarctic Tradition. New and previously unpublished or relatively inaccessible data are summarized. Particularly important are the recent radiocarbon dates which have been obtained, indicating that the Paleoarctic Tradition, known for its microblades, spread south by about 9000 B.P.

Chapter Six, *Mincing Mammoth Meat*, focuses on Dixon's and Tom Loy's innovative study of ancient mammal hemoglobin in order to determine the animal species dispatched by the ancient hunters. This study, certainly the most controversial aspect of Dixon's research, purports to have identified blood on projectile points from mammoth, bison, and Dall sheep. The mammoth blood from one point was intriguing because the projectile point was not fluted, and was recovered from a site that dated approximately 9,500 years old and did not contain mammoth bones.

Chapter Seven, *The Nenana Complex*, is an excellent summary of this early archaeological complex, which is characterized by small, thin triangular and teardrop-shaped bifaces recovered from deposits dating around 11,000 B.P. or earlier. Thus, the Nenana Complex precedes the Paleoarctic Tradition. All Nenana Complex sites appear to be small camps occupied by only a few individuals, and red ochre has been found at several of these sites. The Nenana Complex may have lasted until 8000 B.P. in the interior of Alaska, which suggests to Dixon that this area may have been repeatedly occupied by different groups, with one group possibly displaced by another group.

Chapter Eight, *People Before Paleoindians*, discusses well-excavated but controversial sites in South America and elsewhere that date before 12,000 B.P. Three sites in particular are described in this chapter: Monte Verde in Chile, Pedra Furada in Brazil, and Meadowcroft Rockshelter in Pennsylvania. Dixon is cautious in his acceptance of the early dates for these sites, but he is also somewhat dismayed by the extremely critical reaction to the results of the work done at these sites.

Chapter Nine, *New Discoveries*, provides further discussion of Dixon's and Loy's research into blood residues on early projectile points. In addition to the blood residues found on the points, they found hair on one and cholesterol crystals on another. Dixon notes that an article on his blood research was rejected by *Science*, which he feels was due to the reviewer's inability to accept innovative approaches to the study of Early Humans in the New World.

Chapter Ten, *Synthesis*, summarizes and expands Dixon's interpretation of early Eastern Beringia prehistory. He rejects the hypothesis that fluted points were invented later and independently in Eastern Beringia. Instead, he argues that Eastern Beringia fluted points are more Folsom-like than Clovis, and that fluted points were invented in the continental United States and spread north to Alaska by Llano hunters moving northward to hunt remnant populations of mammoth and bison. He also suggests that the Bering and Chukchi seas were probably controlled by American Paleoartic Tradition peoples who blocked the spread of southern Paleoindians into those areas.

In the final chapter, *Speculations*, Dixon suggests that occasional transoceanic voyages to the New World by Paleoindians may have occurred, as they did for the western South Pacific. Dixon addresses the difficulties that scholars face when they present new or controversial theories concerning the peopling of the New World. For example, after he mentioned in a popular article that he wrote in the 1980s that humans may have colonized the Americas via the Pacific Ocean, he was "sharply and swiftly criticized" by several of his colleagues, with one senior associate suggesting that he not pursue the issue any further for fear of losing his credibility within the profession. Dixon did not accept this advice, however, and he states that researchers who discover information that does not fit accepted scientific paradigms will have to have courage and "risk criticism and rejection from other scientists as they challenge accepted models and present alternative interpretations."

Dixon's book is clearly a valuable contribution to the important topic of the peopling of the New World. A fair amount of previously unpublished or inaccessible data for Eastern Beringia is presented. Written in an engaging, personal style, the story of his and other researcher's involvement in the topic is almost presented in the manner of a detective story. Each chapter builds on the ones before. Photographs of many of the archaeologists who have excavated important early sites in Alaska are included in the book.

This book is not, however, a comprehensive treatment of the various issues relating to the origins of the first Americans, it does not include very much data on the Paleoindians of the continental United States, and it has only brief discussions on the history of Paleoindian research in general (for example, see Dillehay and Meltzer 1991). The title of the book should have had the subtitle *A View from Alaska* because that is the focus of the book. On that account, the book does a very good job

In addition to being well-written, the book is well-edited. I found very few typographic errors. One error that was noticed is an incorrect date for an important citation. In Chapter Seven, page 80, the reference for the definition of the Nenana complex is cited twice as Powers and Hoffecker (1990), yet in the references cited section it is listed as 1989. The correct citation is 1985.

One of the strengths of this book is Dixon's easygoing writing style, which works well for telling the story of his personal quest for the origins of the first Americans. Another significant contribution of the book is the willingness of Dixon to present new ideas and approaches, no matter how controversial they may be, and his discussion of the struggles and successes he had in getting other scholars and institutions to assist him with his research.

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by

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A public conference followed by a scholarly symposium was held at Tucson, AZ in March 1986. Co-sponsored by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, The Southwest Institute for Research on Women, the Arizona State Museum, and the Department of Anthropology and the Southwest Center at the University of Arizona, "Daughters of the Desert" brought together more than 20 scholars to discuss the history of women in southwestern anthropology. The conference included an exhibit with an illustrated catalogue: *Daughters of the Desert* (Babcock and Parezo 1988). Now, with the publication of *Hidden Scholars: Woman Anthropologists and the Native American Southwest*, we have, as the Woodburys state in their Foreword, "a comprehensive survey of southwestern anthropology" (ix) with an expanded history and biographical profiles of some 50-60 of the most important of the more than 1,600 women who have worked in southwestern anthropology.

This volume appears when there is renewed interest in the history of anthropology, the history of women within anthropology (especially American anthropology), and the issue of gender in archaeological research. Recent symposia and conferences have focused on these topics, e.g., "Women in Archaeology: The Second Annual Symposium on the History of American Archaeology" held at the 54th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology (April 1989), and the entire 22nd Annual Chaco Conference (November 1989).

*Hidden Scholars* is a welcome addition to the growing literature on the history of anthropology. It contains a long Preface by Parezo, 16 essays by various authors, and a lengthy concluding essay, also by Parezo. This is a big book - almost 375 double-column pages of text - and yet one wishes it were even bigger: so much is left unsaid, so many important women and their contributions are not discussed (the book focuses on the 1880-1945 period, with some discussion of post-World War II scholars) that at least another 375 pages would be needed for adequate coverage of the subject matter.

Nancy Parezo asks in her Preface (xiii), "Who can work in the Southwest and not refer to at least one site report or ethnography by a woman anthropologist?" The question is rhetorical, but the answer is, unfortunately, that some can and have done so, e.g., McGregor 1941, and others hardly consider women at all, e.g., Taylor 1948; Willey and Sabloff 1974, 1980 (see Reyman 1992 for a fuller discussion of this issue). Parezo's point, however, is well taken: it ought not be possible; that it has been, and all too frequently, validates the book's title, *Hidden Scholars*. Women in the Southwest, as elsewhere, have not received the recognition and attendant rewards (faculty positions, promotions, tenure, financial equity) that they deserve based on their accomplishments.