First Peoples in a New World: Colonizing Ice Age America (review)

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earth will do what it needs to do in order to restore the conditions necessary for the preservation of life within our biosphere. If there is too much CO_2 in the atmosphere, the earth will respond by eliminating its source: humanity. Yet, maybe humanity may survive in some reduced and beleaguered form as the planet restores order and preserves life. Even if that happens, we may survive only a few million years, for our level of complexity will again be so advanced that very deep entropy will prevail and humanity will succumb.

This last chapter is just a tease, for while it examines human history from the theoretical foundation he has established, it does so with just a sketch. I would like to know in much greater depth how the complexity we have created has doomed us. How do we sidestep entropy? For example, Spier tells us that we will exhaust our petroleum reserves in one hundred years and we should explore alternative energy sources. He then reviews the limitations of solar energy, but makes no mention of the potential of wind as an alternative energy source. While this book builds a good theoretical framework for a larger and more comprehensive work on the subject, the framework needs to be strengthened with greater detail. Those later parts of the book dealing with the rise and probable demise of humanity are intriguing but not complete. What is needed now is a text with greater depth related to written history, and greater pedagogical tools for the period between the Big Bang and the agricultural revolution. If that can be accomplished, big history will find greater ease in spreading as a subdiscipline of world history and fulfill its promise, which is to present a unified history of the universe and humanity in one course for the nonspecialist. Spier takes us one important step forward in making big history accessible to all. I look forward to the next, more fully illustrated and documented, step in this process.

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First Peoples in a New World: Colonizing Ice Age America. By DAVID J. MELTZER. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. 464 pp. $50.00 (cloth); $19.95 (paper and e-book).

The time is particularly ripe for a new, integrative summary and reappraisal of the evidence for and our understanding of the prehistoric peopling of the Americas. In recent years, a pre-Clovis inhabitation of the New World has been accepted by a majority of archaeologists

(a revolutionary development, after decades of skepticism), there is a new openness toward coastal route entry scenarios, and the development of genetic evidence has offered new, rich models of prehistoric colonization. We are fortunate, then, to have the recent book by David J. Meltzer, *First Peoples in a New World: Colonizing Ice Age America*, a state-of-the-art summary by one of anthropology's leading scholars of early American prehistory. Its thoroughness, attention to complexity and debate, and eminent readability mark it as a significant contribution for specialists and nonspecialists alike.

The book's central questions are straightforward: who first colonized the Americas (i.e., one migratory pulse or several?), when did they come, how and why did they make the journey across Beringia and throughout two continents, what were their cultural adaptations, and—importantly—what range of possible answers to these questions does the substantial and growing (but necessarily incomplete) body of evidence support? Meltzer's approach regarding this last question is particularly notable. First, he brings together in one volume a vast wealth of interdisciplinary data and models, drawing adroitly on archaeology, geology, chemistry, linguistics, genetics, anatomy, ecology, and epidemiology. Meltzer's narrative, however, is not merely a masterful orchestration of facts, but a series of compelling historical and contemporary vignettes, with real people and personalities, that illustrates how science operates. The development of theories about the peopling of the Americas during the Paleoindian Period (ca. 12,000–10,000 B.P.) has always been dependent on the interaction of raw data with politics, power, and personalities, and Meltzer's integration of historical figures such as Charles Abbot and Aleš Hrdlička serves dual purposes—they simultaneously demonstrate the contingencies of scientific progress and provide enthralling reading.

The book's ten chapters investigate different but overlapping questions regarding early American prehistory (and thus could serve as useful excerpts for student readings or the interested layperson). After providing a broader context in American prehistory, the first two chapters provide detailed summaries of archaeological methods and geologic and ecological perspectives on the landscapes the first Americans must have traversed. Chapters 3 and 4 provide a historical account of the evolution of our understanding of the Paleoindian Period—including the personalities, controversies, and sidepaths that marked that evolution—and of the recent resolution of the "Pre-Clovis Controversy" with the remarkable pre-Clovis Monte Verde site in Chile. (Here, Meltzer's insider account of the meeting of leading archaeologists at a bar in Chile to discuss the validity of the site adds a storyline almost as

compelling as the revolutionary site itself.) Chapters 5 and 6 assess the genetic, linguistic, and morphological (dental and cranial) evidence for early human migrations into the Americas with close analytical attention to points of convergence and divergence among the varied approaches.

Chapter 7 is particularly fascinating, although by necessity the book's most speculative: how and why did early Americans fan out across two unknown continents so rapidly? (The dispersal of hunter-gatherer populations from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego in less than one thousand years sets something of a prehistoric speed record.) Meltzer's discussions of "landscape learning" and "wayfinding" in this chapter, based upon cross-cultural examples and predictive models from behavioral ecology, kindles the imagination as well as scholarly understanding of this rapid and poorly known prehistoric expansion. In chapter 8, Meltzer's objective is clear: with logical and empirical cannons ablaze, he dismantles and discredits the "Overkill Hypothesis" that attributes the extinction of thirty-five genera of late Pleistocene megafauna in the Americas to newly arrived humans. While his arguments and review of evidence convinced this reader, it was also interesting to note the subtle change in Meltzer's tone from balanced moderator of competing theories to axe-grinding partisan.

Chapter 9, the book's penultimate chapter, examines the climatic changes and adaptive diversification and regionalization that accompanied the warming world of the terminal Pleistocene (ten thousand years ago, and when archaeologists date the transition from the Paleoindian to the Archaic Period). Chapter 10 summarizes the epidemiological trauma that followed contact millennia later. Meltzer frames this more historically recent period with a retrospective eye toward the founding conditions that prevented development of immunities by Native Americans to New World infectious diseases, and with a more contemporary eye toward politically charged issues of identity and the politics of repatriation of native remains. (The last chapter contains instructive discussion of NAGPRA, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, and the Kennewick Man controversy, for instance.)

The main body of *First Peoples in a New World: Colonizing Ice Age America* is 344 pages and contains photographs, tables, and diagrams. Eighty appended pages offer nearly seven hundred endnotes and more than six hundred references. The book's thoroughness and attention to complexity are its strengths and indeed make it required reading for any reader interested in early American prehistory, but its mere heft and level of detail may make it an imposing choice for an intro-

ductory textbook or for those seeking a quicker overview (for those, excerpted chapters and/or articles by Meltzer are recommended). But at this exciting juncture in our understandings of the dawn of human inhabitation of the Americas, David Meltzer's monograph has set the standard for integrative scholarship on the subject. It is a bonus to readers that the book is also so sharply written and narratively compelling.

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The Cattle of the Sun: Cows and Culture in the World of the Ancient Greeks. By JEREMY MCINERNEY. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010. 360 pp. $45.00 (cloth).

In this fascinating study, Jeremy McInerney argues that cattle had a central place in the earliest Greek cultures we know of, and that, long after they had lost their economic and practical place in the Greek household in the Classical and later periods, they continued to have an important one in the Greek psyche and religion. McInerney explores this interest by looking at the cow and cattle-related activity in Greek religion, myth, economy, and (as far as can be ascertained) everyday life. He starts in the prehistoric period (especially the Bronze Age cultures of Crete and Mainland Greece) and continues into the Hellenistic Age (down to the first century B.C.E.). This study is very strong on the role of cattle (the cattle *habitus*, as he puts it) in Greek religion and economy, and speculates a great deal about the cow and bull in Greek myth and literature. Though he talks about the prominent role of cattle in art, specific examples aren't common, and there are very few images of any kind (only about ten) used in this book. The book is nonspecialist-friendly in that all ancient texts quoted are translated, though a specialist would like to see the Latin and Greek sometimes, in an endnote if not the main text. I think most nonspecialists would also find useful some sort of translation of the acronymic dating system used for the Aegean Bronze Age (e.g., LM II, LM III) and a map of Greece and/or the Mediterranean, neither of which are provided. The index (six pages) is disappointingly basic. It seems to have been edited excellently.

After an introductory chapter laying out McInerney's thesis, chapter 2 describes the development of pastoralist societies and describes what we know about prehistoric pastoralism. He discusses theories of the origins of animal domestication and husbandry, and notes useful