



Pre-Clovis in the Americas: International Science Conference Proceedings

Dennis Joe Stanford, Alison T. Stenger

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Curious about Paleoamerican sites? Do really old archaeological sites in the Americas hold your interest? What kinds of tools did the earliest people in North and South America use, what environments did they select for living, what foods were important to them? Within these pages, world famous archaeologists and other ancient site specialists report the results of their investigations into some of the oldest and most important archaeological sites and specimens in the New World. For many decades, Clovis was assumed to be the first culture in the Americas. Now, however, sites predating Clovis by literally tens of thousands of years have been recognized. These well documented sites provide far more than the mere validation that sites older than Clovis exist. Importantly, some pre-Clovis site elements, tools, materials, and technologies seem similar to each other, despite appearing in many different geographic regions. Thus, one important task archaeologists now face is to determine what similarities or differences are reflected in these sites and assemblages, and what this can tell us about the people who made them. Additionally, a vast array of occupation environments has now been identified, and the significance of these distinct ecosystems must also be considered. Are these different ecologies suggestive of differing economies and cultural preferences? Are separate and distinct population groups indicated? While the focus of this volume is upon sites and material culture, several additional issues are addressed. Discussions include both the positive and problematic aspects of genetics, and the recognition and analysis of ancient technologies. One question to be addressed is whether the human groups and their tool types descended from a common but distant ancestor? Two other topics discussed briefly are the changes in index species over time and the evidence of dietary change with the extinction of some species of megafauna. Do changes in index species represent more than extinction or survival patterns? Is disease indicated by the elimination of some megafauna but the survival of others? All of these topics, and more, were discussed at a meeting hosted by the Smithsonian Institution. The results of that gathering are shared in this book.

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