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When many scholars are asked about early human settlement in the Americas, they might point to a handful of archaeological sites as evidence. Yet the process was not a simple one, and today there is no consistent argument favoring a particular scenario for the peopling of the New World. Most researchers agree that the Americas were colonized late in the Pleistocene, some 14,000 years ago, but beyond this there is little consensus. This book approaches the human settlement of the Americas from a biogeographical perspective in order to provide a better understanding of the mechanisms and consequences of this unique event. It considers many of the questions that continue to surround the peopling of the western hemisphere, focusing not on sites, dates, and artifacts but rather on theories and models that attempt to explain how the colonization occurred. Unlike other studies, this book draws on a wide range of disciplines--archaeology, human genetics and osteology, linguistics, ethnology, and ecology--to present the big picture of this migration. Its wide-ranging content considers who the Pleistocene settlers were and where they came from; their likely routes of migration; and the ecological role of these pioneers and the consequences of colonization. Comprehensive in both geographic and topical coverage, the contributions include an explanation of how the first inhabitants of North America could have spread across the continent within several centuries; the most comprehensive review of new mitochondrial DNA and Y-chromosome data relating to the colonization; and an important critique of recent linguistic theories. Although the authors lean toward a conservative rather than an extreme chronology, this volume goes beyond the simplistic emphasis on dating that has dominated the debate so far to a concern with late Pleistocene forager adaptations and how they might have coped with a wide range of environmental and ecological factors. It offers researchers in this exciting field the most complete summary of current knowledge and provides non-specialists and general readers with new answers to the challenging and intriguing questions surrounding the origins of the first Americans.