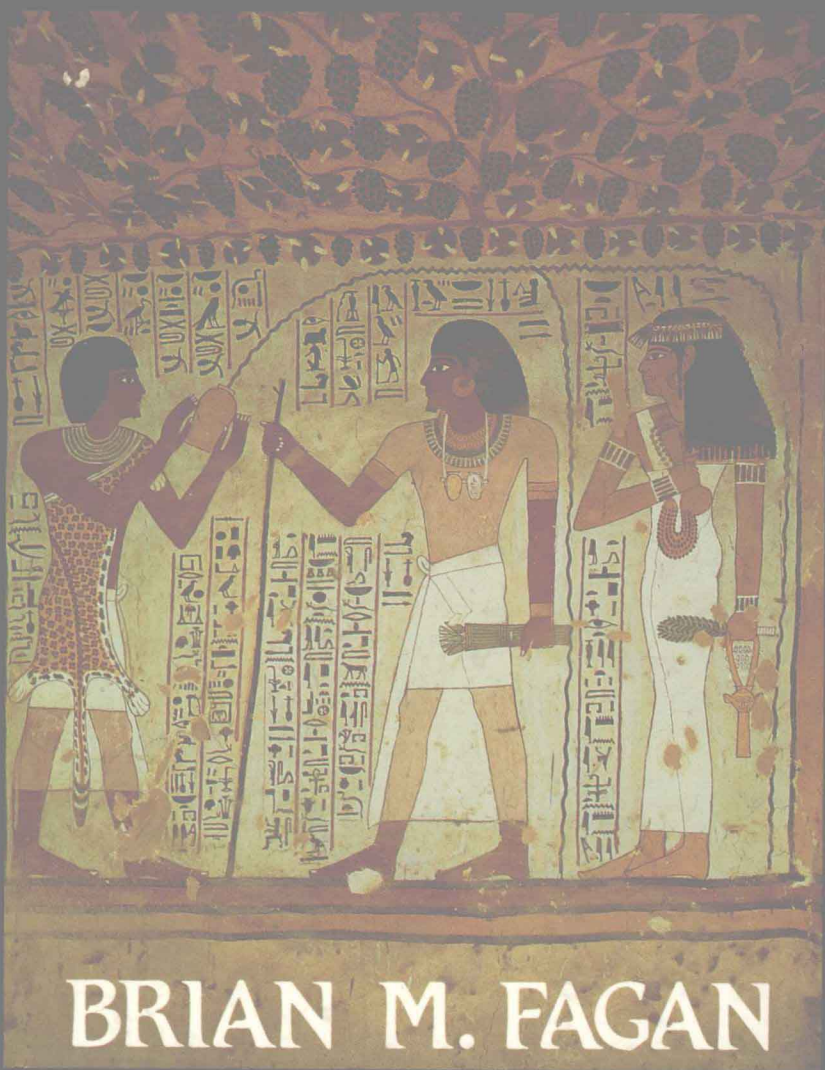


In The Beginning

AN INTRODUCTION TO ARCHAEOLOGY

SEVENTH EDITION



BRIAN M. FAGAN

IN THE BEGINNING

An Introduction to Archaeology

SEVENTH EDITION

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To the Reader

Many people think of archaeology as a romantic subject, a glamorous pastime spent with pyramids, mysterious inscriptions, and buried treasure. This stereotype originated in the nineteenth century, when both archaeologists and the ancient civilizations they uncovered became legendary. Today, more than 150 years of archaeological investigations have turned archaeology into a meticulous scientific discipline. But the excitement is still there, in the many diverse and highly detailed reconstructions of life in the past from finds that sometimes seem trivial. Archaeologists have established the direction of the wind during a bison hunt on the Great Plains about eight thousand years ago, learned which plants made up the wreaths created for Tutankhamen's funeral, and even examined the garbage produced in modern urban America. In this book I describe how archaeologists make and study such finds to illuminate the human past.

In the Beginning introduces the history and methods of archaeology and its significance today. I discuss archaeological concepts and procedures and show how archaeologists describe cultures as part of time and space to interpret the prehistoric past. One objective in this book is to provide a comprehensive summary of the field for people who have little or no experience with it. A second objective is to alert you to a major crisis facing archaeology in our time. All archaeological sites are finite records of the past; once destroyed, they can never be replaced. But treasure hunting by individuals and an explosive increase in the construction of buildings, roads, dams, and the like have destroyed thousands of archaeological sites all over the world. Without access to intact sites, we cannot possibly complete a picture of the human past. The crisis of site destruction is, in its way, as important as the ecological crisis we face. *In the Beginning* is meant to alert you to the need for living responsibly with your cultural heritage.

Archaeology has become a highly sophisticated, "high-tech" discipline in recent years, and there are many more professional archaeologists working in the field than even a decade ago. The result has been not only a knowledge explosion but also the development of ever more sophisticated and fine-grained methods for studying the past. We cannot examine even a small fraction of these elaborate, often expensive, and invariably fascinating methods within the compass of this relatively short book.

Nor do we delve deeply into the powerful statistical methods and computerized approaches that are commonplace in archaeology today. This book focuses on the basic principles of our discipline, on the fundamental tenets that are as important whether one uses a trowel, a laser recording system, or a complicated computer graphics program in pursuit of the past. I hope that you will pursue the topics that interest you in more advanced and specialized archaeology courses or in the many excellent books and articles listed in the Bibliography at the back of the book or in the Guide to Further Reading at the end of each chapter.

The chapters close with summaries highlighting the major themes and concepts. Whenever practicable, drawings and photographs illustrate the subjects the text describes in words. I use specialized terminology as little as possible and define every new term when it first appears. In addition, a Glossary at the back of the book provides definitions of the words used in the book as well as of some words you may encounter in other reading.

I have written this book from predominantly English-language sources for two main reasons. First, my reading in the vast archaeological literature has been necessarily selective and mostly in English. Second, for most of you, English is your native tongue. Although linguistic abilities and time have thus biased this volume toward the achievements and writings of English-speaking archaeologists, archaeology is indeed a global activity, conducted with great energy and intelligence by every nation and in every corner of the world.

Brian M. Fagan

To the Instructor

When I started writing the first edition of this book in 1968, I had no idea that I would be revising it for the seventh time more than twenty years later. *In the Beginning* has been in print during a period of profound change in archaeology. One has only to glance through the first edition and then through this one to see just how much it has changed in the 1970s and 1980s. Hundreds of instructors have assigned the first six editions, and thousands of students have used them. Some respected teachers have even told me that they were introduced to archaeology by *In the Beginning*, which indeed reflects the passage of years. They and many others have helped improve the book by writing to me with suggestions, criticisms, even reprints of their own work. Of course, the seventh edition also reflects my own perceptions of contemporary archaeology and of the way in which the discipline is evolving. Archaeology's many traits, interacting variables, and different forms of feedback make it almost as much a cultural system, evolving multilinearly, as the many cultures it studies.

The seventh edition of *In the Beginning* reflects a number of important trends in archaeology in the past five years, including these:

- An explosion of archaeological data from all over the world, resulting from a vastly expanded community of archaeologists everywhere. This growth has led to a mountain of archaeological literature in dozens of languages, making the task of keeping up-to-date even more challenging.
- A growing emphasis on regional studies, cultural resource management, and nondestructive ways of investigating the past. Remote sensing and computers are increasingly important in archaeology today, for destructive excavation is now seen as a strategy of last resort in many areas.
- Renewed emphasis on multidisciplinary research, especially in the general area of geoarchaeology, placing human activities within an environmental context.
- Vastly increased use of instrumentation and highly scientific approaches to the past. Almost no archaeological research is carried out in this day and age without a battery of equipment and scientific

instruments. These sophisticated tools can include remote-sensing devices such as ground-penetrating radar, lasers, and electron microscopes. Thus the cost of archaeological research is rising. Quantitative methods are now common, with computers applied to create huge data banks on local, regional, state, and even national archaeology.

- Increasing specialization among archaeologists. As the theoretical problems facing archaeology become ever more challenging and frustrating, many scholars have turned to increasingly arcane specializations, specializations that involve them in minute reconstructions of tiny portions of the past. So esoteric are some of these specialties that they seem to bear little relevance to the main objectives of archaeology outlined in this text.
- Quickened interest in site formation processes and middle-range theory. Interpretation of the archaeological record is now a major theoretical debate.
- Ever more precise archaeological fieldwork. Excavation and analysis are becoming more and more accurate, data recovery ever more fine-grained, resulting in some astonishingly minute reconstructions of prehistoric culture, not only from recent settlements but also from early hominid meat caches more than 1.75 million years old.
- New theoretical debates over evolutionary archaeology and “post-processual” archaeology. A new generation of theoretical debate pursues an ever-elusive goal—a unifying body of distinctive archaeological theory.
- Potentially most important, a profound change in archaeology itself. At the start of the 1980s, most archaeologists were academic scholars in universities, colleges, or museums. At the start of the 1990s, most American archaeologists are involved with conservation and management, known as cultural resource management. We are now a more professional discipline, undergoing a revolution that geology, for example, underwent some decades ago. This switch in our ways of thinking about and teaching archaeology is likely to affect us profoundly.
- Last of all, a vanishing archaeological record. In fact, our remnants of the past continue to disappear at an astonishing rate, prey to massive industrial development worldwide and to hordes of looters, vandals and pothunters. Within a generation, much of the archaeological record in more developed parts of the world will have vanished forever.

These are but a few of the fascinating trends in contemporary archaeology that help to form this edition of *In the Beginning*. This is an interesting time in archaeology, for the “new” archaeology of the 1960s and 1970s is no longer new. Then it set out some bold and promising objectives:

imposing great scientific rigor, creating a body of archaeological theory, and searching for general laws of cultural behavior. At first the new archaeologists attacked every concept in archaeology. Today, the level of bombast has subsided, to be replaced by better-focused theoretical debate about everything from style and function to ethnographic analogy. But there is frustration, too, and a widespread feeling that the new archaeology has not delivered its promised advances, that some of its high-minded objectives will never be fulfilled. In part, many of those who are disappointed feel that way because they believed that creating a new body of archaeological theory would be much easier than it has proved to be. It is also because the interpretative problems of much regional and spatial archaeology are obdurate, sophisticated, and difficult, especially when approached with borrowed concepts. Archaeology has spent two decades borrowing such concepts as general systems theory and cluster analysis from other disciplines. These ideas have often proved inadequate or inappropriate for archaeological application, except in the most general way. At the moment, we are midway in a long period of transition, with archaeologists divided into a minority engaged in intensive theoretical debate and the remainder carrying out the same forms of empirical research, albeit in more scientific ways, that were commonplace before processual archaeology came along. Those who believe that this dichotomy will endure are false prophets! What is happening in archaeology has already happened in many mature sciences and is still taking place in much of biology: the development of distinctive and scientific archaeological methods and theories that not only enrich our understanding of the past but add to our understanding of ourselves. We may hope that the short remainder of this century will see archaeology achieve this lofty goal; it depends on the work and cooperation of archaeologists of all theoretical and methodological persuasions. Please encourage your students to think of archaeology as one enterprise, not as dozens of unrelated activities!

One of the fascinating things about revising this book is spotting emerging trends and the cutting-edge research that blazes a new trail in the field. The period since the sixth edition has seen no startling breakthroughs. We are ending a period of consolidation, perhaps of mild despair, marked by signs of a return to basics and much wasted theoretical verbiage that grasps at archaeological straws. There are signs, however, in the renewed debate over evolutionary archaeology that the beginnings of a new theoretical chapter are emerging, some valuable, if extremely challenging, approaches that may yield rich dividends in the 1990s and beyond. In the meantime, it is business as usual, with a continuing proliferation of highly specialized studies, some extremely worthwhile, others esoteric and too expensive, more marginal to the field. It is as if some scholars are running away from the seemingly intractable theoretical problems of archaeology and the parlous state of the archaeological record by burying themselves in arcane research instead. This is not to say that

such research is valueless; it is not. But there is a real danger that we will trivialize our discipline and lose sight of the basic goals of archaeology and its important role in twentieth-century society.

I have changed about 25 percent of this edition, mostly by updating discussions of methods, theories, and case examples. Part One covers the significance, goals, and current crisis in archaeology; the historical chapters in Part Two have been shortened in the interests of space and clarity—and because many readers have suggested this! However, they still cover the early origins of archaeology and its development into the science it is today. Part Three covers the basic concepts of archaeology. I have retained the format and coverage of earlier editions at the request of reviewers, as a good introduction to Part Four, which deals with the recovery of archaeological data. Here I have added new material on site formation processes and fresh examples, and I have rewritten the sections on the preservation of the archaeological record. Part Five contains new coverage on lithic technology and on ceramics.

The second half of *In the Beginning* retains its organization from earlier editions, but it has been substantially updated. Chapters 15 to 19 now include new theoretical advances, and I have redrafted coverage of cultural resource management to reflect recent legislation and the complex reburial controversy. As in earlier editions, I recommend further reading selections for readers who wish to delve deeper into topics treated briefly in this book. Space restrictions prevent me from adopting any other approach.

This is a long book and a complex one. But it is still too short, for one could easily write a thousand-page text on archaeology. Thus I have had to skate over some topics, such as population carrying capacity, in almost indecent haste. I have also firmly omitted discussion of some of the more exotic experimental methodologies that now litter the pages of archaeological literature. Many of them are fascinating, even innovative, ways of researching the past. To my mind, however, they are best left to the advanced student and the specialist, for few of them are strictly relevant to the basic goals of archaeology outlined in these pages. I leave it to each of you to fill in details on topics that you think are given inadequate treatment. I urge you, however, to give full coverage to one vital topic: the growing crisis of site destruction. This subject demands full factual and moral coverage in introductory courses, where many students arrive with the notion of finding buried treasure or collecting beautiful artifacts. Many of us have firsthand experience with treasure hunters and with tragically bulldozed sites. Every course in archaeology must place responsibility for preserving the past emphatically on the public. It is for this reason that the book ends with a stark statement of basic archaeological ethics for everyone.

In the Beginning is a comprehensive introductory look at contemporary archaeology. With the very first edition, I decided not to espouse any one theory of archaeology but to give each instructor a basis for amplifying

the text with his or her own viewpoint and theoretical persuasion. This decision has turned out to be endorsed by many users. A reviewer said many editions ago: "This is the fun with the book." Long may it continue to be so.

As always, this edition is the result of input and advice from many people, both professional archaeologists and students. Their comments have always been challenging and provocative, at times even flattering. I only hope that my efforts to navigate between conflicting viewpoints and priorities meet with their approval. I am deeply grateful to my distinguished colleague Hester Davis for her advice on cultural resource management and for the counsel of George Michaels on quantitative methods.

Finally, a word of profound thanks to the dedicated production staff at HarperCollins who made the seventh edition a reality. I am deeply grateful for their skills.

Brian M. Fagan

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