

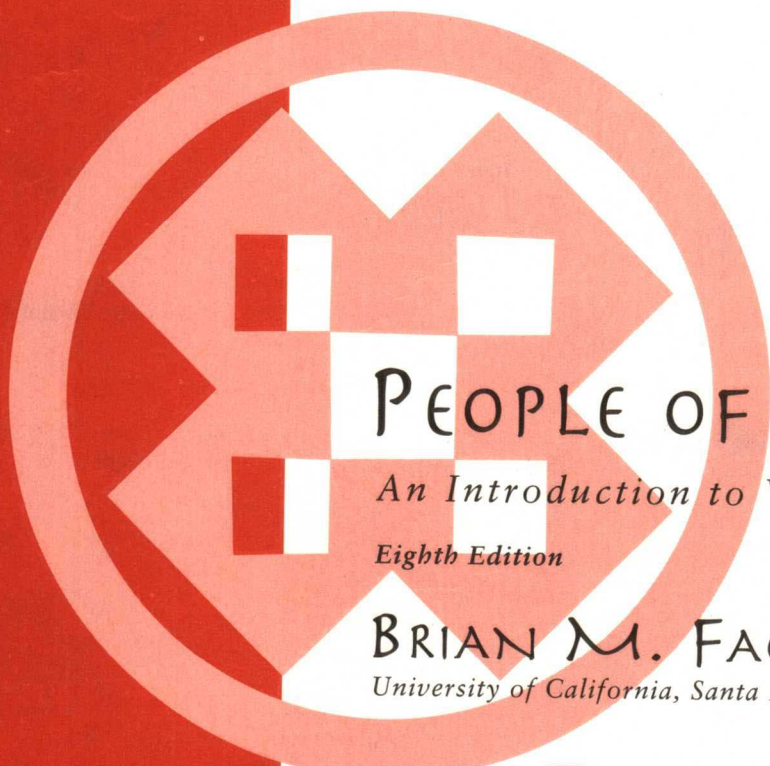
BRIAN M. FAGAN

AN INTRODUCTION TO



WORLD PREHISTORY

Eighth Edition



PEOPLE OF THE EARTH

An Introduction to World Prehistory

Eighth Edition

BRIAN M. FAGAN

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People of the Earth, Eighth Edition

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To all the dozens of archaeologists and students who have read and used this book in its various editions and sent me their comments and criticisms. This is the only way I can thank them all and expose them for what they are—honest and unmerciful critics. I am deeply grateful.

And as usual to our ^{people} cats, who disapprove of authors in general and my writing efforts in particular. Their contribution was to tread on the manuscript—with muddy paws, of course.

PREFACE

• • •

P*eople of the Earth* is an attempt at a straightforward narrative of human history from the origins of humankind to the beginnings of literate civilization. To make the book accessible to those who have not previously studied archaeology, I keep technical terms to a minimum and define them where they do occur.

World prehistory is an enormous subject, so, inevitably, I have had to gloss over many heated academic controversies and sometimes to give only one side of an academic argument. But the Bibliography of World Prehistory at the back of the book is designed to lead you into the more technical literature and the morass of agreement and disagreement that characterizes the subject. Much of what we know about prehistoric times is still based on very inadequate data. The important thing about archaeology, as with any other science, is that it deals not with absolute truth but with successive approximations of the truth.

The structure of *People of the Earth* is comparatively straightforward. Part I consists of one chapter, which covers the general principles of archaeology and some of the ways in which archaeologists try to explain the past. The remainder of the book is devoted to the story of human prehistory. Chronological tables appear at the beginning of most chapters, while the table on the front endpaper acts as a guide to the major developments of prehistoric times cross-referenced to individual chapters of the book. Key dates and terms appear in the margins to give you a sense of chronological directions throughout the text.

This is the eighth edition of a book first published in 1975. The intervening years have seen momentous changes in our understanding of world prehistory, reflected in major changes in each edition. This one is no exception. At a detailed level, I have rewritten, updated, expanded, and culled to reflect recent advances in our knowledge and new theoretical approaches. At the request of many users, Part I has been cut back to a single chapter, which focuses on the absolute basics of method and theory for the purposes of understanding the narrative in later chapters. The African sections of the text have been completely rewritten, I have incorporated new advances resulting from the accelerating decipherment of Maya glyphs, and I have revised several controversial sections, including that on the first Americans. The chronological tables have been changed completely throughout, and the illustrations have been expanded and improved. The past five years have been ones of unspectacular consolidation rather than dramatic new insights, and this edition reflects numerous minor changes in the narrative rather than complete

revisions. To some degree, this is a reflection of a science that is becoming ever more specialized, one that generates important discoveries as much in the laboratory as on-site.

I hope that you enjoy your adventures in archaeology.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Edition eight has benefitted greatly from the willing comments of many colleagues, especially Gina Barnes, Robert Foley, David Freidel, Patrick Kirch, and Chris Scarre.

I would like to thank the following archaeologists for their help in revising the eighth edition of *People of the Earth*. I appreciate their frank comments.

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BRIAN M. FAGAN

MEASUREMENTS NOTE

All measurements are given in feet and inches, with metric equivalents. Dates cited in the text before 40,000 years ago are normally given in years before present (B.P.), while later readings are in B.C./A.D. format, as this seems to reflect current usage. "Present" by scientific convention is A.D. 1950. When using radiocarbon chronologies, it should be noted that each date carries a statistical error (see Chapter 1), which is omitted in the text for clarity. For calibration of radiocarbon dates, see *Radiocarbon*, 1993.

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