

*Prehistoric Warfare in the American Southwest*, by Stephen A. LeBlanc. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, xi, 400 pages, illustrations, maps, references, index. 1999. ISBN 0-87480—581-3. Hardbound \$34.95.

by

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The history of archaeology has often, not surprisingly, been mainly concerned with sites, their excavators, and what they found. But of equal importance are the attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the interpretation of archaeological data. LeBlanc, in *Prehistoric Warfare in the American Southwest*, argues that the long held belief in the essential peacefulness of the prehistoric Anasazi and other Southwestern peoples can be shown to be wholly incorrect, and therefore much that has been written about the prehistoric Southwest needs extensive rethinking. Warfare was an important feature of the ancient Southwest, and he presents carefully marshaled evidence, in great detail, to uphold his conclusions.

Early in this book the author reviews the ideas that have been held about prehistoric Southwestern violence and warfare, going back to Holmes and Bandelier, who, more than a century ago, identified as “forts” some of the ruins they were exploring. But their emphasis, and that of a score of later archaeologists cited by LeBlanc almost uniformly considered these as “defensive” (against “nomads”) and not evidence for interueblo warfare. Nevertheless as early as 1944 Ralph Linton, in *American Antiquity* (“Nomad Raids and Fortified Pueblos”), argued convincingly that warfare of pueblo against pueblo existed in the ancient Southwest. He pointed out, *inter alia*, that “nomads” arrived much too late to have threatened many of the defensive sites that abound in the Southwest.

Linton’s article had little discernible effect for some years, until Florence Ellis in 1951 and I in 1959 continued the argument for widespread prehistoric warfare. More recently Jonathan Haas, Winifred Creamer, David Wilcox, and others have finally begun to convince skeptics of the reality of interueblo violence going back long before historic times. LeBlanc now brings this all together a major synthesis.

It is an important question for the history of archaeological thinking why for so long archaeologists were reluctant to admit the reality of what there was good evidence for. John Bennett offered a reason in 1946 in a significant article (overlooked by LeBlanc) in the *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* (“The Interpretation of Pueblo Culture: a Question of Values”). He points out that ethnologists held two diametrically opposed views about the nature of Pueblo society, one that it emphasized “gentleness, non-aggression, cooperation, modesty, [and] tranquillity” and the other that it was filled with “tension, suspicion, anxiety, hostility, fear, [and] ambition.” The former view was the one constantly expressed by the Southwestern Indian informants on whom ethnographers relied and was very widely held. Ruth Benedict, in *Patterns of Culture* was an influential proponent of this belief. The peaceful-pueblo myth also had a strong influence on archaeologists, who considered information on the recent Pueblos a guide to the nature of prehistoric Pueblo society. Thus the myth of the peaceful pueblos persisted and distorted archaeological thinking for nearly a century. “Defensive” was viewed as just that, for defense against unspecific enemies by essentially peaceful people who did not engage in offensive warfare.

LeBlanc has now corrected this distortion of our understanding of the prehistoric American Southwest. He examines changes in the carrying capacity of the agricultural base, and argues that these changes resulted from climatic changes. In his Early Period, A. D. 0-900, population growth was constrained by

agricultural carrying capacity and warfare was a consequence of this stress. In the warmer climate of the next two or three centuries carrying capacity increased and warfare declined. The cooler climate after 1300 was accompanied by an increase in warfare. This brief and simplified summary doesn't do justice to LeBlanc's presentation of evidence and arguments about climatic influence. Also, other archaeologists may reconstruct the climatic picture somewhat differently—prehistoric climate is not yet a simple matter to determine.

In addition to his climatic argument, LeBlanc examines abundant evidence from site locations, architecture, weapons, kiva murals, and rock art. His combing of the literature is impressive and persuasive. As Stephen Lekson says in a review in *Archaeology* (May/June 1999) "LeBlanc's argument may well become Southwestern orthodoxy, and war a major theme in Southwestern prehistory." While the evidence has been available and familiar for many decades, its "meaning" has been obscured by adherence to the myth of the peaceful Puebloans. Now the history of Southwestern archaeology has taken a major step in a new direction, less by finding new evidence in the ground than by re-examining long available data and by demonstrating that assumptions underlying one of our most important interpretations were faulty.

*Prehistory of Australia*, by John Mulvaney and Johan Kamminga, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., 1999. 480 pages. ISBN 1-56098-804-5. Paper. \$27.95 US

by

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The prehistory of Australia is a fascinating topic. But it has also been a controversial subject, as aboriginal populations, settlers, and archaeologists have argued over the past, its ownership and its meaning and interpretation. Derek John Mulvaney has seen Australian archaeology develop from its early days, and in this book, he and co-author Johan Kamminga try to review the latest evidence. It is not clear who the book is intended for, but it would include professional archaeologists as well as average Australians, aboriginal and non-aboriginal alike. This is the third edition of a work first published in 1969; a second edition appeared in 1975. A lot has changed in the last thirty years, some of which the authors refer to. It is these changes that make the book fascinating from the perspective of the history of archaeology. On one hand, there is more information available as an increasing number of sites have been identified and excavated. The first edition included 17 radiocarbon dates, all that were available at the time; most belonged to the Holocene. The first professional archaeologists began practicing in the 1960s. While there are many more today, most are employed in cultural resource management, rather than academic positions. The climate of research has shifted too, as issues of ownership and stewardship of the archaeological heritage have become extremely important. Mulvaney states that when he started as an archaeologist, he didn't need anyone's permission to do any kind of study. No permits were required, either from the state or from local authorities, and no one would have thought of consulting the descendants of the people whose material and cultural record it was. Aboriginal involvement with archaeology has barely begun even now.

Reading this book, it becomes clear that Americanist and Australian archaeologists have had to deal with very similar issues. Research in both regions began under a colonialist framework; its practitioners were of European descent, writing about the past of people without written records. The fact that Australia was inhabited solely by hunter-gatherers led to the creation of the legal concept of terra nullius, the idea that the land was essentially unoccupied until European arrival. Aborigines were treated as part of the native fauna, with few rights and (presumably) no history, "an unchanging people living in an unchang-