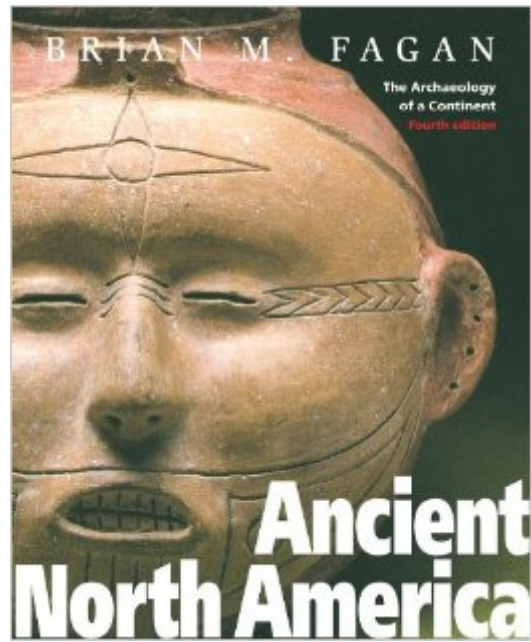


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Ancient North America, Fourth Edition



Synopsis

A clearly written, authoritative synthesis of North American archaeology--the standard textbook on the subject, adopted at hundreds of colleges and universities. Brian Fagan, one of the foremost living archaeological writers and an authority on world prehistory, has completely revised and updated his definitive synthesis of North America's ancient past. The book offers a balanced summary of every major culture area in North America, and places the continent in its wider context in human prehistory. Lavish illustrations, many new to the fourth edition, draw on North America's rich ethnographic record to illustrate key sites and artifacts. The chapter on first settlement has been heavily revised in light of new discoveries in Siberia and the Americas, and current controversies are surveyed. Chapters on archaeological theory, the Great Basin, the Northeast, the Northwest, and the Archaeology of European Contact reflect major advances, and important new discoveries and scientific methodologies receive full coverage. 400 illustrations

Book Information

Paperback: 568 pages

Publisher: Thames & Hudson; 4 edition (April 17, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0500285322

ISBN-13: 978-0500285329

Product Dimensions: 7.4 x 1.3 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.9 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (6 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #219,587 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #118 in [Books > Textbooks >](#)

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Customer Reviews

"Ancient North America" by Brian Fagan is not the book for everyone interested in the topic.

Specifically it is not for the casual reader. This is very definitely a textbook on the archaeology and anthropology of North America. The author assumes a basic knowledge of archaeology: its focus, terminology, techniques, and history, and therefore gives only a cursory explanation of topics like

"culture," "horizon," and "tradition," etc. In the first few chapters Dr. Fagan discusses the issue of first colonization of the continent, describing the limiting factors and the likely time constraints involved.

He goes into the various competing theories of the great migration which have changed very little

since the 1960s because there remains a dearth of unquestioned evidence with which to resolve the issue. Thereafter he discusses the various regional and ecological artifact assemblies and what they indicate about the evolution of life-ways after the initial arrival of human settlers. Make no mistake; this is heavily into discussions of lithic technologies and what they have to say about cultural diversity and spread. Where other, more substantial remains occur--mounds in the southeast and pueblos in the southwest, for instance--or where post-contact life-ways are described, more complete descriptions of life in the past is presented. For the individual who is very much into archaeology and/or what it has to say about life of the indigenous people in North America, the book will be a pure delight. For those for whom the book is a text for a class, like so many undergraduate texts, this one is full to the brim with potentially mind numbing details one might have to memorize for an exam; details that only come easily to a graduate student after having studied individual periods or cultures more intensively! All I can say in this regard is, "That's just the way it goes!" For those who just want to know more about life in the past and have no background or immediate interest in archaeology, the book may be more ponderous than you will want to undertake. A more satisfactory substitute for you might be Fagan's more popular account, *The Great Journey: The Peopling of Ancient America, Updated Edition*, which does not require a background in the subject to understand it nor does it go lengthily into diagnostic lithic technology. What the latter book does include is statements of the results of research, some of the exact wording of which is found verbatim in the more didactic work reviewed here. For those who need to WRITE PAPERS on some aspect of archaeology, North American archaeology, first settlement of the North American Continent, and so on, the book provides a very good ground work by presenting a logically arranged overview of what is known of the settlement of different regions and of the evolution of cultures in the face of climatic changes following the last glacial period. It also provides an amazing bibliography of sources (unfortunately arranged alphabetically rather than by chapter or topic) which will help locate other resources on your chosen topic.

I find this book difficult to read as time wise it jumps all over the place. Not only that, but the print is so small I am constantly having to pull out my magnifying glass to read areas, in particular the captions on the pictures.

Good book but very technical. Not for light reading.

Comprehensive book that is a good reference work for the long history of man in North America

Not happy with the condition of the book. Not Acceptable, hope I can return.

It wasn't that great of a text book, it lacks information and seems more appropriate for a lower level introductory course. For those who are interested in learning Archaeology but have no prior background, this might work for you, but don't plan on using it if you are going to teach an upper level North American archaeology course. In my professors defense, the school misordered this book for his class, and since all the students had already bought it, he decided to utilize it. It is entirely a basic overview and lacks depth to really get deep into the subject. However, the cover feels amazing, so I'll give it points on that. (I'm not joking, I don't have a book with a better feeling cover)

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