Exploring Ancient Native America. By David Hurst Thomas. New York: Routledge. 314 pages. $25.00 cloth; $18.00 paper.

There is a tendency for scholars to review books from an ideal perspective. But to discuss this book, or any of the small class to which it belongs, in such terms would further put off the reckoning(s) which must come sooner or later. This volume should, in fact, be welcomed by both professional archaeologists and laypersons for what it does and what it attempts to do.

A number of archaeologists have long recognized that the field has done little to make its findings accessible to the general public, but few have actually tried to fill the great void. Since the immense growth of Cultural Resource Management (CRM) studies in the 1970s—funded with tax-payer dollars—the gap between the amount of actual excavation and archaeological publication for the general public has exploded at something like a geometric increase for excavation, whereas, at best, publication for laypersons has only increased arithmetically.

Yet the CRM field archaeologists, who perform actual contract excavations and earn their livelihoods from contract work, should not be blamed for this disparity. Very few CRM contracts even provide adequate funds for professional publication of results, much less for publications aimed at informing the people who foot the bill. Further, there are now millions of pages of an archaeological gray literature (the results of CRM work) which are almost totally inaccessible outside the state in which any particular report is filed in a repository. It is thus often difficult for even professional archaeologists to access CRM data. So severe are these problems in many areas that it can be said with confidence that many diligent archaeologists simply can no longer be truly informed about the real status of archaeological knowledge in their own states.

Blessed, then, are archaeologists who publish, and doubly blessed are those who publish for a lay audience. Brian Fagan, an Old World specialist, has turned out a number of often well-received, popular books over the last three decades about archaeology in general and about particular cultural areas. David Hurst Thomas, the author of this book, is an Americanist at the American Museum of Natural History and has had an unusually distinguished career.

It is, however, extremely difficult to adequately inform laypersons about archaeology unless they have actually seen archaeological sites and an array of artifacts. Hence, in the last two decades, an essential step has been taken toward diffusion of archaeological information with the handful of guide books to the sites of particular North American regions or areas. Among the most notable are two books by Joyce Kelly for the Yucatan and Central America (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993, 1996).

Thomas' book, rather than being a site guide to a particular area, essays the Herculean task of providing a guide to Native American archaeological sites (for the entire United States, except Hawaii, and much of Canada) that can be visited by the public. Moreover, the book is a bit unusual in drawing attention to museums with significant artifact collections. And it is likely unique in its inclusion of selected Euro-American sites that illustrate the

range of "culture contact" situations with Indians. The recognition of the growing importance of historical archaeology is one of the book's strengths.

There are essentially only two formats a guide book may have. There is the *Guide Bleu*, or Baedecker approach, in which each site is listed by location. A person walks around a place, guidebook in hand, reading and assimilating information. The other approach is to provide a general picture of cultural development, with reference to particular sites illustrating particular features of that development. Thomas chose the latter. More than one-eighth of the book is taken up by an appendix with a very good listing of about 400 sites and museums, subsumed under political unit, given in alphabetical order by state and Canadian province. Not only are the locations of the sites specified, but phone numbers are also provided.

As might be expected, there are a few notable omissions in the site list. For example, the author overlooks the reconstructed earth lodges at Fort Abraham Lincoln, North Dakota, a state that has only two other listed sites. Nevertheless, for anyone with more than a passing interest in archaeology, the site list is almost worth the price of admission, so to speak.

Near the book's beginning there is a chronological chart giving the placement of the cultures discussed in the text. The chart divides North America into five areas: Far West, Southwest, Plains, Midwest-Southeast (erroneously printed as Midwest-Southwest), and Northeast. The Arctic and Sub-Arctic are not included, and there is no cultural manifestation listed on the Plains from 7000 B.C. to A.D. 1000, or for the Northeast after about 1500 B.C.

The main text contains a foreword and eight chapters. The foreword contains the vital message that everyone must work to save the archaeological record. "The Global Prologue" starts with the undivided world landmass of more than 200 million years ago, very briefly outlines human evolution, and sets the stage for human migrations to the Americas. The chapter "The First Americans" deals with the still controversial possibility of pre-projectile or pre-Clovis (that is, Paleolithic) cultures in the New World, and the fluted-point cultures (beginning with Clovis) spanning a period from about 12,000 to 9,000 years ago. "Spreading Out Across America" deals with the hunting-and-gathering Archaic cultures, and covers the period up to the beginning of the Christian Era. The next three chapters treat the origins and lifestyles of the horticultural people of the Southwest, with emphasis on the spectacular developments at Chaco Canyon; the early part of the Woodlands sequence and Plains villages; and the later part of the Woodlands (temple mound) sequence.

The last two chapters should be of especial interest to most readers of this journal. "Colliding Worlds," the longest chapter in the book, treats well-chosen archaeological sites at archaeology's interface with history: the Viking site in Newfoundland (the only authenticated pre-Columbian New World contact site); a sixteenth-century Labrador whaling station; the context of an Iroquois beatification by the Church of Rome; the missions of Florida and California; and the Battle of the Little Big Horn. The last chapter touches on tribal cultural centers, gives some indications of Native American attitudes toward the sacred, and provides the tourist with some idea of proper behavior in Indian Country, where many sites are located.

When this book is reprinted, it should include an additional appendix to make it more accessible. Impressive as many Mississippian temple mounds are in their own right, for example, there is only one Cahokia, and its interpretive museum is by far the best for this culture. In the added appendix, Thomas should give a separate heading for each cultural unit treated in the text, note each site under its appropriate heading, and then give a rating—Kelly used a system of up to three stars—of the importance of that particular site for informing the tourist about that cultural manifestation.

But neither Thomas nor anyone else can now directly address the main difficulty in this or any comprehensive archaeological guide to North America above the Rio Grande. There is only one possible pre-projectile point site and three sites connected with fluted points that are open to tourists. And there are only a handful of archaic sites. In addition, there are almost no sites from the Arctic or Sub-Arctic for the tourist (in effect publicly masking the entire Inuit cultural tradition). Only active political lobbying to get such sites into the public domain can address these gaps in public access to the archaeological record.

Thomas bends over backwards in this book to get Indian views before the public. In the sidebars, which, throughout the book, break up the text with details on things impossible to treat in a continuous narrative (such as radiocarbon and dedrochronological dating, and the making of fluted points) there are five contributions by four people of Native American heritage. Four of these are certainly most appropriate. But as Thomas is a professional archaeologist, he certainly knows that "oral history" has nothing of importance to tell the archaeologist about Ice Age migrations to the New World, contrary to the apparent belief of the Pawnee Roger Echo Hawk (pp. 41–42). Thomas should make it absolutely clear in the text that this mythic view is not one shared by professional archaeologists, and that the conclusions of archaeologists are based on archaeological data.

To encourage the view that myths, which are now being reshaped and recombined toward overt political ends, can in any way be equated with the knowledge archaeologists obtain from the archaeological record is to encourage destruction of that record. The further back in time "repatriation" of museum collections (both artifactual and burial) is permitted, the less chance for a comprehensive (archaeological) understanding of Native American cultural heritage. Should the record become destroyed through total repatriation, the only "interpretations" of the Native American prehistoric past would then be the politicized nonsense from the activists who have reshaped and recombined earlier oral traditions.

It should not, however, be inferred from this that all myths necessarily lack value to archaeologists—only that the accommodation of the archaeological record to mythic interpretations in general, or to a specific renderings of a mythical tradition, is not only unsound methodology, but, given the nature of units employed by archaeologists and the methods and techniques employed, is also for the most part absurd. That a few archaeologists have tried to "test" different versions of a group's more recent migration legends (such as Alfred Bower's circa 1950 University of Chicago dissertation) should

be seen as an attempt to make independent archaeological investigations, not as accommodation to the mythical viewpoint.

Roger Echo Hawk's interpretations of Pawnee myths, filed with papers in the Pawnee repatriation case against the Nebraska State Historical Society, would make extraordinary interesting reading for any archaeologist or ethnohistorian. This is especially true when they are read in association with my analysis of them (filed in the same case and, I believe, part of the public record) on the methodological problems involved in such studies, and the logical absurdities which follow from Echo Hawk's statements. In the Nebraska case, Echo Hawk was only concerned with claiming "Pawnee" and "Arikara" material back two thousand years—not all the way back to the Ice Age.

As one who traces his own descent from the Cherokee Ross family, I would be offended, for example, to see the body parts of my collateral John Ross strewn around a museum. Yet isn't there a point beyond which genealogical or cultural descent (or affiliation) make claims to "proprietary" rights on an ancestor or affiliate absurd? In the Northwest, one tribe and archaeologists have been in litigation for two years about the disposition of a 9,000-year-old burial. And the more general situation will undoubtedly get worse before it gets better.

It is, then, a very complicated framework within which Thomas' book must be evaluated. If any sort of "equitable" social solution is to be reached, the greater national population, tribal elders, and Congress need to be informed not only of the status of archaeological findings, but also of the interpretative problems as well. All the laws on repatriation and human burials are phrased in terms that have little, if any, applicability to the scholarly methods and techniques of archaeologists and anthropologists. This, by itself, promises a future of long and bitter litigation. Education, then, may provide hope for a rephrasing of the laws and help in building a national social consensus on their application. This, essentially, is the tack—the educational answer—taken by Thomas. That someone with the personal archaeological prestige of Thomas has written a popular book, and has simultaneously tried to build bridges between archaeologists and Native Americans, may be the most significant thing about this book.

Yet, suppose, as a cynic might have it, that the people who have real power in this country care neither about archaeological resources nor Indian rights. By giving Native Americans a bit more control of "their cultural patrimony" they may have surrendered only an appearance of an advance in political power, without the reality. In this scenario the longer the litigation between archaeologists and Native Americans, the longer it will take the latter to realize that they have actually gained nothing of substance, and the longer their activism will be kept from being channeled into matters of real reform. What if the activists (unwittingly or otherwise) are, in effect, merely the agents of the wishes of the American power structure?

The real context in which important questions must be asked about archaeology and Native Americans clearly shows the limitations in viewing one side or the other as bad or good. The vast expansion of CRM work both massively increased the ranks of archaeologists and made many of these new

archaeologists economically dependent on excavating the Native American patrimony. Hence, the Native American patrimony ceased to be merely of scholarly interest to them, and became a vital interest. But the CRM laws were poorly drafted in regard to meaningful scholarly criteria. And with less and less reporting of the archaeological work accomplished, professional archaeologists, Native Americans, and the national public at large became less conversant with the real nature of that patrimony, and Indian activists made more and more demands for its control, further hampering knowledge of the content of the patrimony. The problem, then, is a social structural one, made manifest by laws that breed conflict. Are the laws simply poorly written, or are they themselves a manifestation of a strategy of "divide and conquer"?

Melburn D. Thurman

The First Nations of British Columbia. By Robert J. Muckle. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998. 128 pages. $19.95 paper.

Robert J. Muckle had a daunting task: write a book about the original inhabitants of British Columbia, addressing all the issues of arrival, survival, social structure, linguistic diversity, history, technology, mythology, art, European contact, changes as a result of European contact, and current sociopolitical conditions. He accomplished all this in 128 pages, with illustrations, six appendices, a glossary, and a selected bibliography included.

Aside from the brevity of treatment, the book does contain some very interesting information. Though the style of writing is rather informational in tone, the passive voice construction, which dominates every page of the text, makes the reading less exciting than the subjects deserve. One more notable issue concerns the complete lack of citation until the last chapter which seems rather odd in light of the anthropological bent the author hails as the key to understanding all cultures.

In the first chapter Muckle addresses an important issue, one that concerns the title of the book. He explains the history behind the current term Canadians employ to label their original inhabitants, *First Nations.* It is quite a feat to acknowledge the history of identification problems as a result of the ambiguous all-inclusive term *Indian.* It is also noteworthy that there is tremendous global reluctance to any term other than *Indian.* Though Canada is quite progressive in sociological matters, the issue here, what to call these peoples, is not one very open for compromise or counsel, but rather follows the typical pattern that the government decides on a term it applies to particular people under their reign. Thus, the current government-approved label calls the former Natives (and former Indians) First Nations. The label seemingly recognizes preeminence of habitation of the people that wandered over the polar ice caps in their journey to the new lands some ten to twenty thousand years ago.

In the second chapter, the issues of history come into play as the label functions to cover all the peoples from Bonavista to Vancouver Island, though