

Book Reviews

MEN AMONG THE MAMMOTHS: VICTORIAN SCIENCE AND THE DISCOVERY OF HUMAN PREHISTORY. By A. Bowdoin Van Riper. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1993. 267 pp. ISBN 0-226-84992-9. \$16.96 (paper).

This is a book about the recognition of human antiquity by Victorian science. Developed from Van Riper's 1990 dissertation at the University of Wisconsin, it is now published as part of a series edited by David Hull, *Science and its Conceptual Foundations*. Although a book about the history of science, it should appeal to prehistorians from a variety of disciplines. Van Riper implies that it is particularly relevant for paleoanthropology because the Victorian consensus on human antiquity marks the beginning of the multidisciplinary approach that characterizes paleoanthropology today.

In a 5-year period between 1858 and 1863, thinking about the age of humankind was revolutionized. Even more dramatically, in a 6-month period, March to September of 1859, six papers arguing for human antiquity, all reflecting and promoting a major change in thinking, were read by some of the most preeminent geologists of the time. This period of intellectual change in the natural sciences, beginning with the excavations at Brixham Cave, ended with Lyell's publication of *Antiquity of Man* in 1863, and marks the emergence of a scientific consensus that humans were old, contemporaneous with extinct species. Although the period has been considered a "revolution" by many scientific historians, who often described it as a triumph of the powers of induction—that is, after the blinders of dogmatic religious and scientific objections to an ancient recent world were lifted, the evidence for human antiquity was obvious for everyone to see—this view has also been refuted: Donald Grayson in *The Establishment of Human Antiquity* argued that before 1859 the evidence for human antiquity was debatable. Here Van Riper emphasizes that changes in scientific interpretation and philosophy, and

not the obvious nature of "the truth," allowed for an understanding of the age of humankind. Van Riper, while recognizing this period as an important turning point, downplays its revolutionary character. Instead, he describes it as a culmination of a long period of changing thought and also as a starting place for a new world view shared by many disciplines—a new face of science.

Van Riper is interested in the changes over three periods in what he calls "intellectual topography" (after David Allen), a term used to describe the relationships between disciplines and their shared world views. For the first period, comprising the two decades leading up to "the consensus," he emphasizes the relative importance of and interrelationships between archeology and geology and their impact on the human antiquity question. The chapter on archeology focuses, perhaps unduly, on the question of why archeologists were uninterested in the antiquity question, a focus that in some ways seems an artifice designed to make historical archeology appear more relevant to the story than it was. Nevertheless, it is an interesting and well-written account. Van Riper makes the point that archeology at the time was solely historical archeology, an extremely inductive, data-oriented discipline that gained much of its support and many practitioners from local communities interested in their historical roots. Given the Victorian archeological commitment to large data sets and textual corroboration, prehistoric samples were unattractive to historical archeologists, and prehistoric research was of no help in reconstructing the histories of local parishes. Human antiquity simply was not addressed in the endeavors of historical archeologists.

By contrast, geology, while sharing archeology's empirical approach, was fundamentally interested in the human antiquity question since the presence of humans defined the "recent world," the period that marked the end of geological time. As did the archeologists for their local communities, the geologists sought to create a detailed "picture" of the history of life on earth. However, they tended to dismiss the evi-

dence for human antiquity, either claiming that burials in ancient strata were intrusive, or that the stratigraphies of cave sites were too complicated for valid analysis. *Men Among the Mammoths* outlines several changes in the geological thinking of the 1850s—about progressionism, stratigraphy, and glacial theory—that paved the way for the acceptance of human antiquity. Van Riper may gloss too quickly over these issues, which are critical to his argument that the consensus was an outgrowth of previous thought. While the intellectual contexts of these shifts are sketched out (rather anglocentrically, as where Cuvier's contribution to the demise of unilinear progressionism is unmentioned and only attributed to Owen), the sociopolitical contexts are ignored. The impact of changing relationships between religion and science on the human antiquity question is not addressed, although recognized as a *fait accompli* by the 1840s. However, these topics lie outside Van Riper's own research, and the first three chapters of the book do provide a nice description of the archeological and geological intellectual communities up to the "revolution," emphasizing their similarities and differences, showing that the "revolutionary" events led by Falconer, Prestwich, and Evans, among others, were in some ways rooted in a flow of changing geological thought.

The second part, the pivotal section of the book, covers the period from 1858 to 1863, focusing on how the consensus on human antiquity was reached, and how data, particularly from Brixham Cave in southwestern England, acted as a catalyst in this process of intellectual change. Before Brixham Cave, although the geological community was prepared (more or less) to accept evidence of human antiquity, they were reluctant to do so. This is the most interesting part of the book, as Van Riper chronicles the excavations and interpretations of Brixham Cave, showing the relationships between the amateur and career geologists involved in the site, and ultimately how the force of individual commitment changed the thinking of a field and ultimately a world view. Brixham Cave contained undisturbed cave sediments with stone tools among extinct fauna, convincing first Pengelly, the gifted local ama-

teur, and then Falconer, a pillar of the Victorian geological community, of the case for human antiquity. Within 18 months Falconer convinced the rest of the geological community, first by swaying his colleague Prestwich with data from open air French sites, thus overcoming objections to the validity of cave data. At Falconer's urging, Prestwich visited Abbeville and St. Acheul with his friend Evans, who was an archeologist (historical) as well as a geologist, and both returned convinced. In the spring of 1859, at a special meeting engineered by Prestwich and Falconer, Victorian geologists announced the evidence from a number of sites, both British and continental, for human antiquity. In September 1859, Lyell announced the new consensus to the public at the British Association for the Advancement of Science meetings in Aberdeen. The story of Brixham Cave and its repercussions is quite riveting, particularly in its depiction of how this "revolution," while greased by changing ideas in the geological community, was really pushed through by a handful of individuals, acting primarily behind closed doors.

In the period following the BAAS announcement until 1863, when Lyell's *Antiquity of Man* was published and brought the consensus to fruition, this core group of geologists vigorously defended their data, sought corroborative data in new sites and in old publications, and extended the consensus until virtually all members of the scientific community were convinced. During this period archeology became involved as it became recognized that the stone tools, once ignored, could be viewed as data. In 1861 the Ethnological Society (which included many geologists and many Darwinians among its members) and the British Archeological Association held joint meetings with both archeologists and geologists in attendance. They actively cultivated the same popular interest in prehistory and stone tools that had supported their disciplines in the past. Therefore in the human antiquity arena, long-lasting unions were forged between disciplines, and links were maintained with the popular culture that had traditionally characterized both archeology and geology.

The final chapters discuss the long-term impact of the new consensus on both the lay

public and on science. Van Riper argues that the human antiquity question simultaneously was made more relevant and was eclipsed by the Darwinian issues that engendered such emotional response from both lay and scientific communities. The case for human antiquity was more palatable than evolution and was accepted more readily, in some cases almost as a compromise, even by the very pious. It is less clear how the intellectual topography shaped in this period affected paleoanthropology as a discipline. *Men Among the Mammoths* begins and ends with the proposition that this period has had direct bearings on the multidisciplinary nature of paleoanthropology today. As interesting as the story of the Victorian consensus on human antiquity is, I am not convinced that the multidisciplinary nature of human paleontology is due to any particular intel-

lectual legacy. Modern prehistory owes at least as much to the French and German natural history traditions that focused heavily on anatomy and paleontology as it does to the British geological/archeological alliance, and it is probably anglocentric to overstate the singular influence of the consensus on future multidisciplinary studies. Nevertheless, this book provides new insights on the origin of our discipline, pulling away from the classic focus on the development of evolutionary thought. It is a good read, and I consider it a valuable contribution to our understandings of processes of intellectual change and the history of anthropology.

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VESTIGES OF MORTALITY AND REMEMBRANCE: A BIBLIOGRAPHY ON THE HISTORICAL ARCHEOLOGY OF CEMETERIES. By Edward L. Bell. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press. 1994. 419 pp. ISBN 0-8108-2893-6. \$47.50 (cloth).

This is a nice reference work! Edward Bell has taken on the task of collecting and identifying a very substantial body of research on *historical* cemeteries. The book begins with an introduction if archaeological investigations of historical cemeteries which also includes an essay on "Scholarly Trends and Prospects." The bibliographic citations themselves are divided into five sections: Archaeological Survey and Excavation Reports; Biological, Physical, and Forensic Anthropology and Historical Demography; Deathway, Ethnography, and Theoretical Perspectives; Grave Markers and Cemetery Landscapes; Repatriation, Curation, and Law. The book ends with an appendix of key words and author and subject indices. The sections of the book are logical and useful. It facilitates browsing in those areas where one is most focused at the moment, and the key words give one a clearer sense of the contents of each work. I found the overview of scholarly trends and concepts interesting

and useful. Here again, the various approaches to cemetery studies is presented in orderly fashion with some chronology of trends in research under the various subtopics. Categories include a variety of theoretical approaches taken in historical cemetery studies, from functionalist to post-processual, and several works are cited which aid in subsequent searches in the bibliographic sections.

I devised a few searches through the bibliography to see how well I could locate appropriate references. These included African-American cemeteries, demography, Southwestern United States, and several authors' names (including my own, of course). In general, I was able to find many useful and interesting citations and to work back and forth from the indices to the bibliography sections very easily. I did not find serious omissions of references; if anything, I was struck with how much material is cited of which I was totally unaware.

I think there is much useful information for physical anthropologists in this volume. There is quite a lot on skeletal analysis and a great deal of material on Native Americans. Bell has been resourceful in capturing a great deal of the work done by physical an-