



# Preface

Frauds, myths, and supposed mysteries about humanity's past are moving targets for those of us committed to the scientific investigation of human antiquity. Clearly, it is important for anyone interested in the human past to know, for example, that there is no evidence for a race of giant human beings in antiquity, no broken shards of laser guns under Egyptian pyramids, and no proof that refugees from Atlantis were building mega-pyramids in Bosnia more than 10,000 years ago. Debunking such nonsense is fun and useful in its own way, but of much greater importance is the process we employ to determine that such claims *are* nonsense. The utility of *Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries* rests in its use of interesting and often hilarious archaeological hoaxes, myths, and mysteries to show how we can *truly* know things about the past through science. *Frauds* is not just a book about how we know what *isn't* true about the human past; it's every bit as much a book about how we know what *is* true.

## *Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries:* The Book That Almost Never Was

When I first began circulating the manuscript for this book back in 1986, I was hopeful that *Frauds* had at least the potential to make a meaningful contribution to the teaching of archaeology. I was confident that it would be a valuable resource for my colleagues, and, most important, I was convinced that it would be a book students would enjoy. Book publishers, however, disagreed with my confidence and conviction. I no longer remember the precise number of rejection letters my unsolicited manuscript produced; I think I stopped counting at sixteen. Those letters were dreary in their sameness—metaphorical pats on the head for producing an

“unusual manuscript” that seemed very interesting, but not one that might lead to a book that archaeologists would be willing to consider for adoption in their courses. After all, the rejection letters maintained, a semester is already too short a period of time to cover all the methodology that should be covered in an introductory archaeology course. That same semester framework, I was told, hardly allowed sufficient time in a world prehistory survey course to cover the breadth of genuine human antiquity, let alone the deadends of frauds and myths. There just wouldn’t be enough time in standard archaeology and prehistory courses, or so the rejection letters maintained, to include a deconstruction of preexisting misapprehensions students might harbor about the archaeological record and its study. And while the book seemed well suited to a course dedicated to the discussion of popular misconceptions about antiquity—the discussion, in fact, of “frauds, myths, and mysteries” about the human past—the unanimous opinion of the rejection letter writers was that there couldn’t be very many such courses in the first place.

All that changed when I approached Jan Beatty, then an editor at Mayfield Publishing. I knew Jan from another book of mine and I passed the *Frauds* manuscript along to her hoping she could suggest the name of a small publisher who might be willing to take a chance on my *Frauds* book, never really thinking that Mayfield would be interested. Jan read through it, called, and, to my surprise, suggested that before I sent it to anyone else she would send it out for review for Mayfield’s consideration. At the time, I thought that she and the Mayfield crew did this merely as a favor to me. I was wrong. Jan is a terrific editor with a great track record for signing successful anthropology texts and saw potential in the *Frauds* book where others didn’t. Mayfield published the book and when McGraw-Hill bought out Mayfield it continued publishing it. The fact that this book has been in print now for more than seventeen years and is going into its sixth edition is a direct reflection of its success, a success made possible by Jan’s vision. I am forever grateful for her support.

## What’s New in the Sixth Edition?

Both the science and the pseudoscience surrounding the human past are dynamic phenomena and serve to inspire each new edition of this book. Specifically, in this sixth edition, I have made the following significant changes, updates, and additions:

### *Chapter 1: Science and Pseudoscience*

**All of the surveys** discussed in previous editions, both of the general American public as well as those conducted among university students, concerning science and pseudoscience in general, and extreme claims made about

the human past and its study in particular, **have been updated** to include polling results from as recently as 2007.

*Chapter 2: Epistemology: How You Know What You Know*

The statistics behind the childbed fever hospital epidemic are laid out in more detail. The **shocking results of a new poll conducted among scientists** are presented, in which a small, but distressing percentage admit to ignoring data that contradict their hypotheses.

*Chapter 3: Anatomy of an Archaeological Hoax*

Along with presenting some new information about the Shinichi Fujimura hoaxes in Japan, the chapter contains a **new section presenting a tongue-in-cheek primer on how to conduct a successful archaeological hoax**. In this new section, I present the particulars of the discovery in the seventeenth century of the two hundred or so “scarith of Scornello,” fraudulent scrolls written in a fabricated version of the Etruscan language (Rowland 2004).

*Chapter 4: Dawson’s Dawn Man: The Hoax at Piltdown*

The section on the modern paleoanthropological record of human evolution has been updated and rewritten.

*Chapter 5: Who Discovered America?*

The discussion of the pre-Clovis occupation of America has been updated and the organization of the discussion has been reworked. **New perspectives on the Vinland Map and the Kensington Stone** are presented.

*Chapter 6: The Myth of the Moundbuilders*

A nineteenth-century source recently discovered by archaeologist Brad Lepper is discussed, showing even more clearly that the Newark Holy Stones of Ohio were frauds. A **new and detailed discussion of the archaeoastronomy of the Moundbuilders** is presented, preparing students for more discussion of the topic of astronomical knowledge in antiquity in Chapter 12.

*Chapter 7: Lost: One Continent—Reward*

New, more precise **radiocarbon dating for the eruption of Thera** and new claims about evidence for Atlantis found in the Caribbean are discussed.

*Chapter 8: Prehistoric E.T.: The Fantasy of Ancient Astronauts*

A more **detailed discussion of the so-called Baghdad Battery** is presented.

*Chapter 9: Mysterious Egypt*

**Tutankhamun's most recent MRI** is discussed, showing that the boy king most likely died in an accident, and not as a result of murder. An entirely new and detailed section addressing claims concerning **the discovery of purported pyramids of extreme antiquity in Bosnia** has been added.

*Chapter 10: Good Vibrations: Psychics and Dowzers*

The focus of this chapter has been significantly shifted. Though still covering claims of psychic archaeology and dowsing for archaeological sites, the discussion of these **unsupported methodologies for finding, excavating, and interpreting archaeological sites is placed more firmly within the context of genuine archaeological practices**. The chapter now has far more currency and relevance for a course in introductory archaeology.

*Chapter 11: Old Time Religion—New Age Visions*

The discussion of Intelligent Design and the attempt to fundamentally alter how evolution is taught in our public schools has been thoroughly updated. An entirely new section has been added on the discovery of ossuaries in Jerusalem, first in 2002 and then in 2006 that some have claimed, respectively, are **the burial boxes of the brother of Jesus Christ and, then, of Jesus Christ himself**.

*Chapter 12: Real Mysteries of a Veritable Past*

The real “mysteries” of Upper Paleolithic cave paintings, the rise and fall of the Maya, and Stonehenge have each had their discussions revised and updated. The new discovery of a **habitation and festival site just two miles from Stonehenge** and dating to the same period is presented.

## Special Features of *Frauds*

- A Quick Start Guide follows this Preface. Like the quick start guides you may sometimes receive with new software, the Quick Start Guide for *Frauds* provides a quick summary, in this case, of how to assess claims made in the name of science in general, and the study of the human past, in particular.
- Each chapter has an associated **Frequently Asked Questions** section. These questions represent a sample of queries from my students over the years that relate specifically to the issues and controversies addressed in the chapter.
- The informal, uncontrolled, unfiltered, and freewheeling context of the Web continues to have exciting implications for disseminating

information about the human past. These same qualities of the Internet, however, also mean that more misinformation about the past can be spread to a far greater number of people far more quickly. Rumors about the discovery of Noah's Ark (now in Iran, not Turkey) or the excavation of extraterrestrial alien bodies beneath an Egyptian pyramid can appear on anyone's computer anywhere in the world virtually the instant such stories are fabricated. Tall tales about the human past no longer need rely on word of mouth to be spread; anyone with a computer, and an Internet provider can shout such nonsense to the world. The good news here is that archaeologists can shout back. There are many fine Web sites presenting genuine archaeological discoveries and some that respond explicitly to the folderol that dogs our discipline. Each chapter includes an annotated list under the title **Best of the Web** with a selection of Web sites (and their Internet addresses) put up by museums, individual archaeologists (amateur and professional), anthropology departments, and others. A brief description of what each of these sites presents is a new feature to this edition. Don't look for the bizarre, absurd, extreme, or nonsensical on my lists. These sites are produced by people who conduct field research, analyze artifacts and sites, and are committed to the scientific interpretation of the human past.

- To make it easier to locate and scan the Best of the Web sites, the *Frauds* home page is available at [www.mhhe.com/frauds6](http://www.mhhe.com/frauds6). Every Web site listed in the Best of the Web sections of *Frauds* is linked to and accessible through the *Frauds* page. Instead of typing in the URLs, you need only get onto the *Frauds* page. From there, click on the Student Edition link. Then click on the Best of the Web link. This brings up a chapter-by-chapter listing of links to the Web sites listed under Best of the Web in the book. Simply click on any of the URLs and you will be taken to that site.
- Each chapter presents **Critical Thinking Exercises**. In these I attempt to challenge the reader to apply the scientific method and scientific reasoning to the general issues raised in the specific archaeological examples that are at the core of each chapter. In answering the questions posed or in carrying out the specific exercise, the reader must be able to synthesize and apply the most important messages of the chapter.
- The Video Companion Guide can be found on the *Frauds* Web site. The purpose of this guide is twofold: (1) to direct readers to helpful video documentaries of the topics covered in each of the chapters of this book, and (2) to assist the professor who is looking for audiovisual material to accompany this book in a university course.