THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF AUSTRALIA’S DESERTS

This is the first book-length study of the archaeology of Australia’s deserts, one of the world’s major habitats and the largest block of drylands in the Southern Hemisphere. Over the last few decades, a wealth of new environmental and archaeological data about this fascinating region has become available. Drawing on a wide range of sources, The Archaeology of Australia’s Deserts explores the late Pleistocene settlement of Australia’s deserts, the formation of distinctive desert societies and the origins and development of the hunter-gatherer societies documented in the classic nineteenth-century ethnographies of Spencer and Gillen. Written by one of Australia’s leading desert archaeologists, the book interweaves a lively history of research with archaeological data in a masterly survey of the field and a profoundly interdisciplinary study that forces archaeology into conversations with history and anthropology, economy and ecology, and geography and earth sciences.

Mike Smith is the senior archaeologist at the National Museum of Australia. For more than 30 years, he has worked extensively across the Australian arid zone, piecing together the archaeology of this immense continental region of dunefields, sandy rivers, salt lakes, and desert uplands. His previous appointments include field archaeologist at the Northern Territory Museum in Darwin and Alice Springs, research Fellow in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the Australian National University, and lecturer in archaeology for the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at the Australian National University. A Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and of the Society of Antiquaries (London), he was awarded the Rhys Jones medal by the Australian Archaeological Association in 2006 for ‘outstanding contributions to Australian Archaeology’. In 2010, he received the Verco medal from the Royal Society of South Australia for his research.
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THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF AUSTRALIA’S DESERTS

MIKE SMITH

National Museum of Australia
For Ben,

Lost in the Strzelecki Desert as a 10-year-old
and tracked through the night.

And for Moshu,

born in Alice Springs
with hair the colour of red desert sands.