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.
The Cambridge World Archaeology series is addressed to students and professional archaeologists, and to academics in related disciplines. Most volumes present a survey of the archaeology of a region of the world, providing an up-to-date account of research and integrating recent findings with new concerns of interpretation. While the focus is on a specific region, broader cultural trends are discussed and the implications of regional findings for cross-cultural interpretations considered. The authors also bring anthropological and historical expertise to bear on archaeological problems and show how both new data and changing intellectual trends in archaeology shape inferences about the past. More recently, the series has expanded to include thematic volumes.

RECENT BOOKS IN THE SERIES

LI LIU AND XINGCAN CHEN, *The Archaeology of China*
STEPHEN D. HOUSTON AND TAKESHI INOMATA, *The Classic Maya*
PHILIP L. KOHL, *The Making of Bronze Age Eurasia*
LAWRENCE BAHAM AND PETER MITCHELL, *The First Africans*
ROBIN DENNELL, *The Palaeolithic Settlement of Asia*
CHRISTOPHER POOL, *Olmec Archaeology and Early Mesoamerica*
SAMUEL M. WILSON, *The Archaeology of the Caribbean*
RICHARD BRADLEY, *The Prehistory of Britain*
LUDMILA KORYAKOVA AND ANDREJ EPIMAKHOV, *The Urals and Western Siberia in the Bronze and Iron Ages*
DAVID WENGROW, *The Archaeology of Early Egypt*
PAUL RAINBIRD, *The Archaeology of Micronesia*
PETER M. M. G. AKKERMANS AND GLENN M. SCHWARTZ, *The Archaeology of Syria*
TIMOTHY INSOLL, *The Archaeology of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa*
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.