



Prehistory, Personality, and Place: Emil W. Haury and the Mogollon Controversy

J. Jefferson Reid, Stephanie Whittlesey

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When Emil Haury defined the ancient Mogollon in the 1930s as a culture distinct from their Ancestral Pueblo and Hohokam neighbors, he triggered a major intellectual controversy in the history of southwestern archaeology, centering on whether the Mogollon were truly a different culture or merely a “backwoods variant” of a better-known people. In this book, archaeologists Jefferson Reid and Stephanie Whittlesey tell the story of the remarkable individuals who discovered the Mogollon culture, fought to validate it, and eventually resolved the controversy.

Reid and Whittlesey present the arguments and actions surrounding the Mogollon discovery, definition, and debate. Drawing on extensive interviews conducted with Haury before his death in 1992, they explore facets of the debate that scholars pursued at various times and places and how ultimately the New Archaeology shifted attention from the research questions of cultural affiliation and antiquity that had been at the heart of the controversy. In gathering the facts and anecdotes surrounding the debate, Reid and Whittlesey offer a compelling picture of an academician who was committed to understanding the unwritten past, who believed wholeheartedly in the techniques of scientific archaeology, and who used his influence to assist scholarship rather than to advance his own career.

Prehistory, Personality, and Place depicts a real archaeologist practicing real archaeology, one that fashioned from potsherds and pit houses a true understanding of prehistoric peoples. But more than the chronicle of a controversy, it is a book about places and personalities: the role of place in shaping archaeologists’ intellect and personalities, as well as the unusual intersections of people and places that produced resolutions of some intractable problems in Southwest history.

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