



Uncovering the Past, A History of Archaeology

By Jr. William H. Stiebing

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In *Uncovering the Past*, William H. Stiebing, Jr. offers an absorbing nontechnical history of archaeology, tracing the study of ancient material culture from its beginnings in the Renaissance through its development into the sophisticated modern discipline we know today. The first study to focus on archaeology as a discipline, Stiebing has organized this concise history into the four stages of archaeological development. The first two stages (1450-1860 and 1860-1925), known as the "heroic age," focus on the exploits of colorful, dynamic excavators who have made their mark on history and our imaginations. We read accounts of Giovanni Belzoni and the removal of the seven-ton colossus of Ramesses II, which was dragged by wooden platform and transported by boat from Egypt to London; we witness the clergyman John Peters's skirmish with Arab tribesmen, who surrounded his excavation site and finally pillaged and burned his camp; and Heinrich Schliemann's quest to prove the authenticity of Homer's *Iliad* by searching for ancient Troy along the Turkish coast. And we watch as archaeology comes of age as an academic discipline, employing stratigraphical excavation techniques, typographical sequence dating, and stratigraphically based pottery chronology--laying the foundation for universal archaeological activity. The third phase (1925-1960) marked the era of "Modern Archaeology," a time when, using the now generally accepted stratigraphical method of excavation, scholars were able to synthesize data to define individual cultures and trace their development through time. This period saw a greater use of scientific instruments and procedures to locate, date, and interpret remains, such as aerial photography, metal detectors, and most importantly, carbon-14 dating and tree-ring chronology. With over eighty photographs, illustrations, and maps.

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