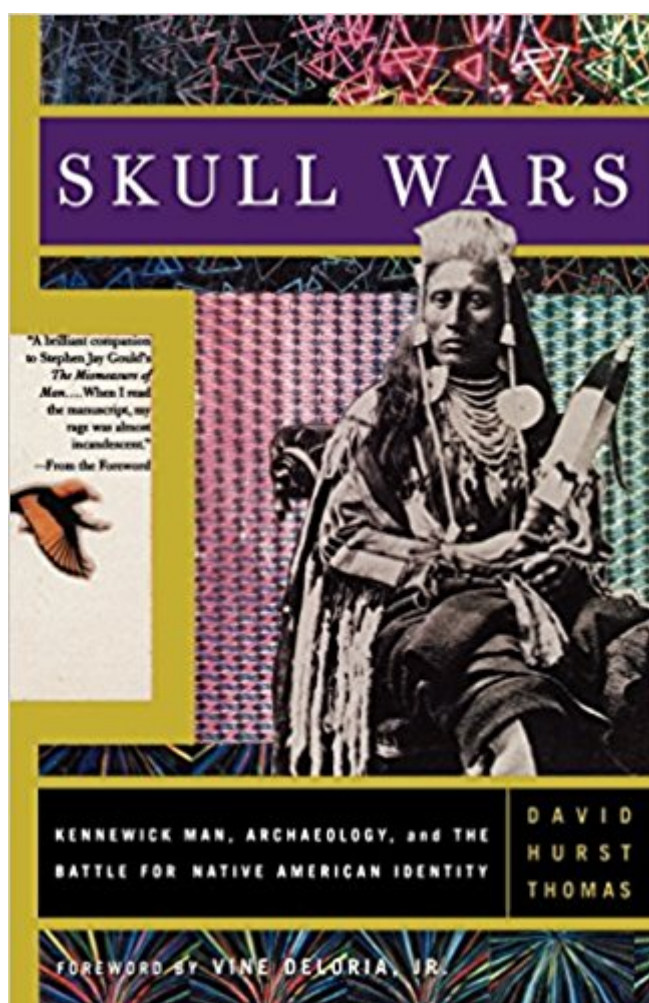


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# Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, Archaeology, And The Battle For Native American Identity



## Synopsis

The 1996 discovery, near Kennewick, Washington, of a 9,000-year-old Caucasoid skeleton brought more to the surface than bones. The explosive controversy and resulting lawsuit also raised a far more fundamental question: Who owns history? Many Indians see archeologists as desecrators of tribal rites and traditions; archeologists see their livelihoods and science threatened by the 1990 Federal reparation law, which gives tribes control over remains in their traditional territories. In this new work, Thomas charts the riveting story of this lawsuit, the archeologists' deteriorating relations with American Indians, and the rise of scientific archeology. His telling of the tale gains extra credence from his own reputation as a leader in building cooperation between the two sides.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Since its discovery in 1996, the issues surrounding Kennewick Man have grown ever more complicated and controversial. Out of this fracas comes *Skull Wars*, David Hurst Thomas's masterful contribution to the debate. The book is sure to stir passions even as it seeks to offer a better way for archeologists, anthropologists, and Native Americans to work together in the future. When it was determined that Kennewick Man, a skeleton with Caucasoid features discovered near Kennewick, Washington, was estimated to be more than 9,000 years old, it effectively lobbed a grenade into the already tense arena of the origins of the pre-Columbus peoples of the United States. Thomas, curator of anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, leads the reader through the development of American anthropology and archeology, the many

reinterpretations of Native Americans by non-Indians, an assertion of native rights, and the eventual intercession of the federal government, ironically, as protective party. *Skull Wars* is a gripping account of the way race, scientific practice, history, and politics converged around an ancient skeleton. --Julia Riches --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Is there a greater paradox in North American history than the Indian? Labeling them either superhuman or subhuman, noble or savage, we've had a hard time placing the people that Columbus mistakenly called "los Indios." When Native Americans began disappearing after centuries of maltreatment, scientists promoting bogus racial theories arrogantly collected Indian cultural artifacts and physical remains, robbing graves and decapitating those killed in battle, before packing off their religious items, skulls and bones to museums. Is it any wonder that many Indians today bitterly resent and mistrust both anthropology and archeology, referring to them as "vulture cultures"? In 1996, one of the continent's oldest and most complete skeletons, Kennewick Man, was unearthed in central Washington. When some scientists claimed it possessed Caucasoid features and openly questioned the origins of the continent's early inhabitants, Indians were incensed and demanded the return of the remains, setting off yet another furor in this ancient tug-of-war over history written in bone. Thomas, an eminent anthropologist, deftly describes the ongoing battle over Kennewick Man and past stormy relations between Indians and the scientists bent on studying them. With wit, logic and much reasoned sympathy for Native Americans, he lambastes science for failing to see Indian peoples as they really are, while exploring the sensitive and difficult question of who ultimately owns history. Thomas's impassioned plea for mutual respect is a welcome bridge across a dark chasm of American history. Illustrations not seen by PW. (Apr.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is one of the best books I have read on a complicated and painful subject. It is a historical survey of archaeology in America and is written beautifully. The past is so sad, but the author has hope for the future being better. He cites inspiring examples of co-ordination between Native Americans and archaeologists. It is an interesting book that is hard to lay down and I read it almost without pause. I have loaned it to 2 friends and they liked it also.

I had to read this for an archaeology class and I loved it. It's interesting and well-written, but more importantly, it has a great description of the history of the relationship between anthropologists and Native Americans throughout U.S. history. Parts of it are quite shocking; I believe everyone living in

the U.S. (not just anthropology or history students) should read it, because it shows the control Westerners had, and still have, over how we think about history and science, and how we think about indigenous groups of people. At one point Thomas mentions that Native Americans cannot be considered just another disadvantaged racial minority in the U.S., and he does a great job of showing why. There is bias for the indigenous viewpoint, which is not unfounded, but he nevertheless presents facts and events clearly, and provides opposing viewpoints for many arguments. He explains the efforts of Native Americans to reclaim their identity through NAGPRA and demonstrates why such a law was necessary for the country. I really recommend that everyone read this book.

This book is just wonderful. As an archaeologist, it is sometimes difficult to understand the scope of archaeology's impact on Native Americans, but this book does a great job of summarizing not only the history of archaeology in the US, but the history of archaeology's impact on Native Americans. While 15 years old, I'd say it is a must-read for anyone interested in Native American history, archaeology or anthropology. While some "archaeology" books are mostly speculative fluff trying to make a profit, this book is great for professional archaeologists or those with just a casual interest. I think the only way to make this book better would be to have an audio version read by Mr. Thomas himself.

I originally ordered Skull Wars because it was required reading for an Archaeology course. Imagine my surprise when it was not only interesting, but also written in such a way as to be entertaining without taking away from the scholarly information. I would recommend this book to everyone, especially people who are not studying archaeology or anthropology, not just because it's a good read, but also because it deals a lot with American history and who we are as a nation, as well as giving voice to Native American perspectives that are mostly ignored by mainstream America.

Not finished reading, but skull size is no longer accepted and I found the first 15 chapters boring.

I really savored every page of this book. One of the best I have EVER read on both an OVERVIEW of american prehistory, and american archaeology. Addresses all the important questions, and most importantly to me, the author seems very unbiased. At FIRST i thought he was going to be definitely a Pro-Native American viewpoint, since Prof. Vine Deloria wrote the foreward. However, although the authoer is PC, he is in such a way as not to be "in your face" with it. I think a very balanced

book. I will keep my copy handy and refer to it often, as it is a truly VALUABLE resource! I understand more of the political ramification so of the government vs the Indians now, and the author told it in a way so as not to bore you to tears. Very well done, and my sincere, heartfelt compliments to the author, for a job well done.

So far so good, haven't finished yet but it has proven to be a good read, hope to finish in the next weeks to come...A very informative and comprehensive work... hats off to Thomas....

Very interesting and educational.

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