



Robert G. Bednarik: **Palaeoart of the Ice Age**. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 2017. 248 pp.
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The British publishers, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, have released a book with a very attractive title on a theme about which there have been many hundreds of books and thousands of papers. The reader, therefore, might logically question what else is there to write about. Well, the answer is in the personality of the author, whose take on the subject is novel and expands on others "limited in their approach, because they deal only with the early art of southwestern Europe." The published book is therefore, "the first book to offer a comprehensive synthesis of the known Pleistocene palaeoart of six continents".

The book is divided into a total of seven chapters. Chapter One: Outlining the Issues; The nature of palaeoart, About this book; About Eve; Summing up. Chapter Two: Africa; Earlier Stone Age (ESA) and Lower Palaeolithic; Early Middle Stone Age (EMSA; Middle Stone Age (MSA); Later Stone Age (LSA); Discussion; Chapter Three : The Americas; Introduction; North America; South America; Discussion; Chapter Four: Asia; Siberia; Eastern Asia; Southern Asia; South-western Asia; Discussion; Chapter Five: Australia; Introduction; Misconceptions; Pleistocene petroglyphs; Pictograms and portable palaeoart; Discussion; Chapter Six: Europe; Introduction; Lower Palaeolithic palaeoart; Middle Palaeolithic palaeoart; Early Upper Palaeolithic (EUP) palaeoart; Later Upper Palaeolithic (LUP) paleoart; Chapter Seven: Palaeoart of the Ice Age; Summarising the evidence; Towards a cultural sequence; A proposa; Let history be the judge. Each chapter is accompanied by extensive footnotes works cited.

The published book is somewhat controversial, inconsistent and in places unbalanced. Perhaps it would be better to

more precisely define the nature of this "book", it is in fact a published collection of Bednarik's articles. It's clear, that the chosen theme is very wide-ranging both temporally and geographically and therefore it complicated to give a simple and accurate description. First of all, to the organisation of the text. Robert Bednarik is the author of many articles and each of the chapters herein is intended to be structurally the same as his articles. Unfortunately, he doesn't always stick to this strict schema. After a number of readable passages, the flow of the text is interrupted by discussion, interpretation or jumps in time or location. As a reader, I would very much welcome the observation of the themes in individual chapters (continents), making it easier to navigate the text. Besides this, the text would surely benefit the work of teachers, because it isn't always completely clear where the author is heading.

I do value the fact that the reader, whether professional or student, gets a good overview of the oldest human art in the work, which is – as was the original intention of the author – ordered chronologically from the oldest to the youngest and geographically by continent. This book is indubitably successful, if we want to get a quick overview of really the oldest art.

It is very unusual for a book to have cited literature appearing at the end of each chapter of the book because it is the work of a single author. It is a fact that Robert G. Bednarik has a great deal of knowledge from his own experiences and has published many articles. However, it is unacceptable in scientific work for Bednarik to cite primarily his own work and, more often than not, in a context in which the reader might think that it is his own results.

Anthropologists and archaeologists might be curious about the new human types, called "*Robust Hominins*" and "*gracilis*", created by the author as a construct for the art of the appropriate epochs. Among the polemics about the age of "must be much more older" paintings, doubts about the

accuracy of accurate analyzes (Divje Babe), assertions of the type ... "their hypothesis has become an absurdity ..." (p. 175), ... "more pernicious distorting factors contributing to this perilous state: Those attributable to false dogmas but dominant in mainstream archeology ..." (p. 10), malignant argument, misconceptions, armchair archaeologists, archaeological fantasies, lobby and many others, which appear to contradict the authors assertion, ..." "This book is the first attempt to present a balanced account" (p. 213).

There are also factual errors in the text: Vertebra with curvature from the Lower Paleolithic site, Stránská Skála is not a forest elephant, but a bison (p. 172) without the anthropic impact, in the cave at Kůlna in Moravia there were Aurignacian findings (p. 188), likewise there weren't "several" decorative objects. The book is best read by someone who can overlook the personal, sometimes over-personal authorial commentary, so that they are not influenced by misleading interpretations.

Essentially we can agree with the description of the book, as it is listed on the publishers website: "Its key findings challenge most previous perceptions in this field and literally re-write the discipline". Of course the assertion that the book really presents the origins of art, "...in a balanced manner, based on reality rather than fantasies about cultural primacy" ... is in the end up to the eventual reader.

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