

# Continuity and Discontinuity in the Peopling of Europe: One Hundred Fifty Years of Neanderthal Study

Silvana Condemi and Gerd-Christian Weniger (eds.)

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Condemi and Weniger's (2011) *Continuity and Discontinuity in the Peopling of Europe: One-Hundred Fifty Years of Neanderthal Study* is a timely and comprehensive tome. The volume is of course "timely" given the occasion which the volume commemorates—the 150th anniversary of Fuhlrott's discovery—but this is not what is meant by "timely" here. There has been a veritable tsunami of Neanderthal-related discoveries in recent years, without any sign of relenting. As such, regardless of any anniversary, *Continuity* (as well as its companion volume, Conard and Richter 2011—not reviewed here) is a welcome opportunity for researchers to take stock and reflect on past and present achievements, before once again plowing forward. The volume contains 27 papers, each one evidencing a tremendous amount of effort. Thus, this review will not dampen each paper's contribution by attempting to discuss each one individually whilst simultaneously adhering to the *Paleoanthropology* book-review word limit. Instead, an attempt will be made to present the volume holistically, with occasional reference to particular papers to illustrate broad themes. Those looking for summaries of each chapter can instead turn to the papers penned by the book's editors, Condemi (Chapter 2) and Weniger (Chapter 27), who succinctly but-ton up its contents.

The range of topics contained within *Continuity* is impressive. Physical anthropology, genetics, paleoecology, chronological dating, and archaeology, among others, are all represented, though the majority fall into the first category (for those interested in additional archaeology-related topics, see volume II, edited by Conard and Richter [2011]). Significant evolutionary (e.g., dispersals, relatedness) and methodological (e.g., systematics) debates are thoughtfully considered concurrently in numerous chapters. For example, Henke and Hardt's (Chapter 3) critical examination of the origin, speciation, and dispersal of the genus *Homo* provided the perfect platform for their spirited discussion of species definitions and taxonomic units. The importance of systematics is again emphasized in Tattersall's (Chapter 4) discussion of the Sima de los Huesos specimens, and how they may or may not relate to particular, extensionally defined hominin groups.

In regards to paleontology and physical anthropology, the volume nicely balances review papers with focused case-studies. The reader can find in-depth analyses ranging from the examination of a single humerus (Volpato et

al., Chapter 15), to chapters reviewing continental growth patterns (Tillier, Chapter 12) and population dynamics (Trinkaus, Chapter 24). The chapters dealing with non-physical anthropology topics are here generally limited to reviews, but make no mistake, these do not merely report. For instance, Orlando and Hänni's (Chapter 21) evaluation of Neanderthal paleogenomics takes the non-geneticist by the hand and guides him/her through the intricate discourse of Neanderthal/*Homo sapiens* admixture debates, while highlighting several avenues of future exploration. The Joris et al. (Chapter 22) article provides a tremendous amount of chronological data that will surely be a quick and handy reference for researchers focusing upon the MP/UP Transition in Europe. Finally, broad analyses of faunal turnover and paleoecology throughout the Middle and Late Pleistocene allowed von Koenigswald (Chapter 9) to ask questions of hominin immigration and disappearance.

The ambitious geographic scope of *Continuity* is clearly evident. While no stone is left unturned in the Neanderthals' European heartland, the reader is treated to select case studies across Asia as well. Goren-Inbar's (Chapter 8) presentation of archaeological evidence from the Levant paints a coherent picture of behavioral complexity and advanced cognition at the ESA/MSA Transition, alongside several ideas amenable to future testing. Liu and Wu (Chapter 7) report on a multitude of hominin fossils from China, and Smith et al. (Chapter 13) assess the dental development of a juvenile hominin from Uzbekistan.

Some chapters are unique in that they explicitly examine how the concept of "Neanderthal" has influenced the way in which we think philosophically about modern *Homo sapiens* populations in terms of "the other," or, as Wolpoff and Caspari (Chapter 26) scrutinize, the relationship between science and sociopolitical issues. For example, Zilhão's (Chapter 25) fiery synthesis of the MP/UP Transition is a rigorous inspection of archaeological evidence across Europe that leads him to reject the Human Revolution paradigm and conclude "...the philosophical or religious need to place 'us' at the top of the ladder of life (or of creation) still prevails, and explains the continued search for images of what 'we' are not (or not anymore) that, by contrast, enhances the basics of what 'we' are..." (p. 360, emphasis original). And certainly the late F. Clark Howell's (Chapter 1) transcribed lecture provides an invaluable perspective on the development of modern Paleoanthropology from one

of its chief architects.

In terms of presentation, *Continuity* is clean and organized. The *Springer Vertebrate Paleobiology and Paleoanthropology Series* is, in general, quite attractive, and that is distinctly apparent here. Each chapter's references immediately and appropriately follow its respective chapter, and the first page of each paper thankfully contains author contact information, key words, and the volume citation. This format is not only ideal for Springer's practice of selling individual chapters, but is extremely useful for students and professionals alike. The figures are clear, informative, and for the most part high resolution, while the tables are reader-friendly.

Given the diversity of topics, hypotheses, and methodologies contained within its pages, *Continuity* is not a

book one should pick up and read straight through (as this reviewer did). Instead, *Continuity* should be given a slow burn—its contributions need to be read, and digested, over time and as needed. It is a valuable sourcebook with respect to numerous aspects of Neanderthal evolution, adaptation, and behavior, and, along with its second volume (Conard and Richter 2011) will surely be used as a point of reference to measure how much has been learned about the Neanderthals at the 200th anniversary of Fuhlrott's momentous insight.

#### REFERENCE

Conard, Nicholas, and Jürgen Richter. 2011. *Neanderthal Lifeways, Subsistence, and Technology: One Hundred Fifty Years of Neanderthal Study*. New York: Springer.



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