

Ice Age archaeology has a special fascination, for it was during this time that our ancestors became fully human, both biologically and mentally. Europe has played a central role in the history of Ice Age studies. It was in Europe that the discovery of tools with the bones of extinct animals demonstrated the “antidiluvial” age of humanity, and it was in Europe that the basic chronological foundations were laid for the work that has followed.

This may have given us a distorted view of human prehistory. There is reason to suspect that Europe was a rather atypical backwater during much of the Ice Ages. Moreover, the continent was simply too cold and inhospitable for our earliest ancestors to inhabit, so the prehistory of Europe begins long after that of Africa or Asia.

Still, the later stages of human evolution are better known in Europe than anywhere else, and Ice Age Europe is a fascinating place to study—all the more so because experts still disagree about such fundamental questions as how long ago the biology and intelligence of

our ancestors became equal to our own—or even whether early Europeans survived into the later Ice Ages or were replaced by newcomers from Africa.

This issue of *Expedition* differs in its organization from many others. All the authors have worked together to give the reader a coordinated picture of Ice Age Europe. The first article sets the stage with an introduction to Ice Age climates and conditions. Harold Dibble then provides an introduction to paleolithic archaeology that serves as a framework for the articles that follow: Nancy Minugh-Purvis describes the people of Ice Age Europe as known from their fossil remains and discusses the scientific debates concerning how to interpret them; Randall White presents the most spectacular aspect of Ice Age archaeology, the art of the European Upper Paleolithic; and, in the final article, I cover one of the most elusive of all topics, the origins of human language.

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