



Learning Strategies and Cultural Evolution during the Palaeolithic (Replacement of Neanderthals by Modern Humans Series)

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This volume is motivated by the desire to explain why Neanderthals were replaced by modern humans, in terms of cultural differences between the two (sub-) species. It provides up-to-date coverage on the theory of cultural evolution as is being used by anthropologists, archaeologists, biologists and psychologists to decipher hominin cultural change and diversity during the Palaeolithic. The contributing authors are directly involved in this effort and the material presented includes novel approaches and findings. Chapters explain how learning strategies in combination with social and demographic factors (e.g., population size and mobility patterns) predict cultural evolution in a world without the printing press, television or the Internet. Also addressed is the inverse problem of how learning strategies may be inferred from actual trajectories of cultural change, for example as seen in the North American Palaeolithic. Mathematics and statistics, a sometimes necessary part of theory, are explained in elementary terms where they appear, with details relegated to appendices. Full citations of the relevant literature will help the reader to further pursue any topic of interest.

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Editorial Review

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Alex Mesoudi is Reader in Anthropology at Durham University, UK. He conducts research into human cultural evolution and social learning. He uses a combination of lab experiments and theoretical models to explore the individual-level processes – who copies what, from whom and when – that underlie broad patterns of cultural change. He has authored over 40 peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters and one previous book entitled “Cultural Evolution: How Darwinian Theory Can Explain Human Culture and Synthesize the Social Sciences” (University of Chicago Press, 2011).

Kenichi Aoki is Visiting Professor at Meiji University and Emeritus Professor at the University of Tokyo. He currently conducts theoretical research on cultural evolution and on the genetic evolution of learning strategies. He has also authored theoretical articles on group selection, gene-culture coevolution and mate choice. He is coeditor of two volumes focusing on the Neanderthal-modern human problem, “Neanderthals and Modern Humans in Western Asia” (Plenum Press, 1998) and “Dynamics of Learning in Neanderthals and Modern Humans Volume 1 Cultural Perspectives” (Springer 2013).

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