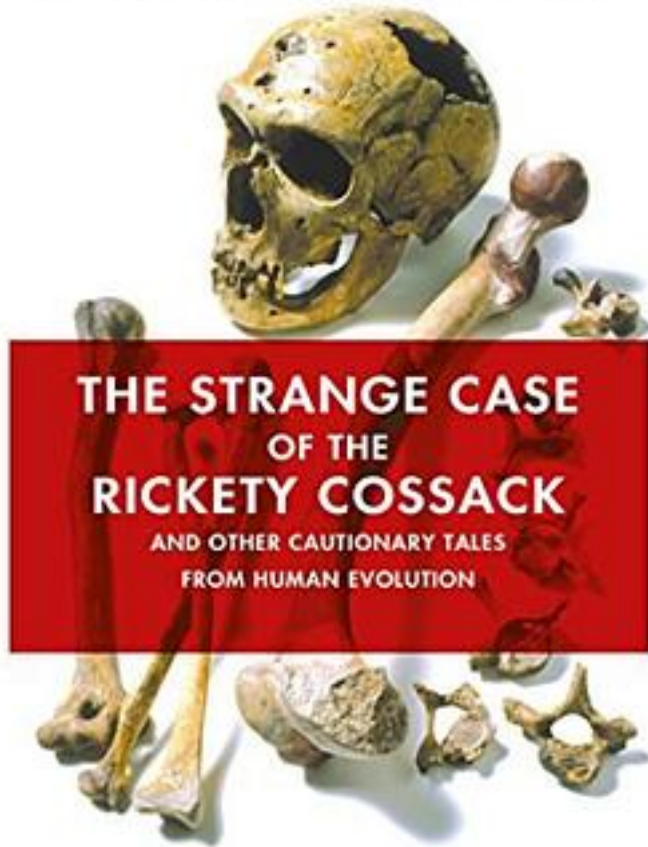


The Strange Case of the Rickety Cossack

IAN TATTERSALL
CURATOR OF THE SPITZER HALL OF HUMAN ORIGINS,
AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY



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In his new book human paleoanthropologist Ian Tattersall argues that a long tradition of "human exceptionalism" in paleoanthropology has distorted the picture of human evolution. Drawing partly on his own career - from young scientist in awe of his elders to crotchety elder statesman - Tattersall offers an idiosyncratic look at the competitive world of paleoanthropology, beginning with Charles Darwin 150 years ago, and continuing through the Leakey dynasty in Africa, and concluding with the latest astonishing findings in the Caucasus. The book's title refers to the 1856 discovery of a clearly very old skull cap in Germany's Neander Valley. The possessor had a brain as large as a modern human, but a heavy low braincase with a prominent brow ridge. Scientists tried hard to explain away the inconvenient possibility that this was not actually our direct relative. One extreme interpretation suggested that the preserved leg bones were curved by both rickets, and by a life on horseback. The pain of the unfortunate individual's affliction had caused him to chronically furrow his brow in agony, leading to the excessive development of bone above the eye sockets. The subsequent history of human evolutionary studies is full of similarly fanciful interpretations. With tact and humour, Tattersall concludes that we are not the perfected products of natural processes, but instead the result of substantial doses of random happenstance.

作者介绍:

IAN TATTERSALL is Curator Emeritus in the Division of Anthropology of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. The author of many books, including the widely praised "Masters of the Planet," he is often interviewed about human evolution in the media and speaks around the world. He is the winner of numerous awards, and lives in Greenwich Village.

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标签

科学和心理学

评论

光看书名象一本趣闻集，其实是个人学术小传嵌在大的学科历史里，对古人类学一个多世纪来的发展梳理的非常清晰，对一些贯穿始终的辩论，比如进化是渐进还是跳跃的过程，古生物学的“种”应如何定义，作者不仅详细铺垫了历史背景而且给出自己的证据和见地。态度严肃，文笔上佳，科普书里真正良心之作

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书评

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