

**Jon Mathieu**

**A Short History of the Alps from Prehistory to the Present**

*Am Anfang war Hannibal. Geschichte der Alpen im Überblick*

This book project, commissioned by Reclam Verlag Stuttgart, discusses the history of the Alpine area from prehistoric times to the present. The Alpine area measures roughly 200,000 square kilometers and stretches across eight countries (in alphabetical order: Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Slovenia, and Switzerland). How does one write a short history about such a long period of time, and across a large area? I decided that the book should be truly historical in character, rather than geographical or anthropological; that it follows a comparative line of reasoning; that it touches on all relevant domains such as culture, environment, society, economy, and politics (without giving preference to one of them on principle); and includes problematiques and open questions, rather than only certainties. As a lead question, I chose a remark from Braudel's famous study on the Mediterranean in the sixteenth century: "But the Alps are after all the Alps, that is, an exceptional range of mountains." *Une montagne exceptionnelle*—Is that correct? In which respects? And why?

Here is a tentative list of chapters: (0) Introduction; (1) The Alps in European History; (2) Alpine Research and Modern Historiography; (3) In the Beginning was Hannibal; (4) Making a Living—Below and Above; (5) Paths to the Nation State; (6) Religious Culture, Early Science; (7) Alpine Perception—Stereotype and Diversity; (8) Which Modernity? (9) Europeanization and Ecologization; (10) Conclusion and Outlook.