

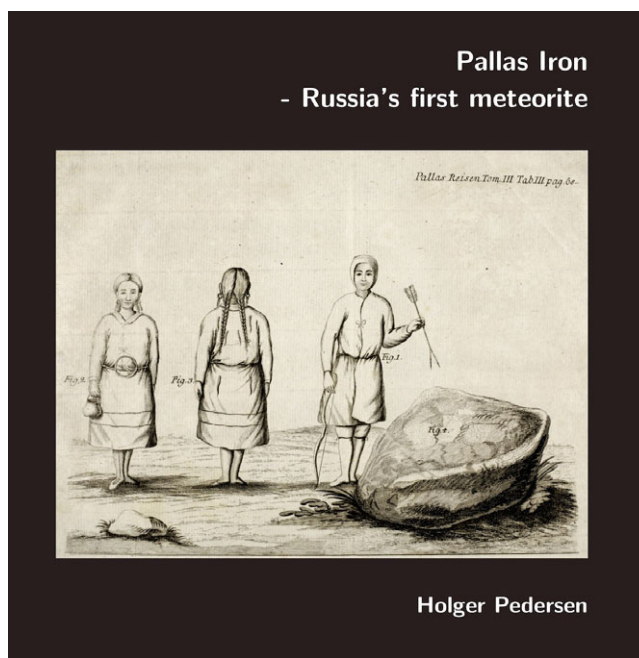
Book Review

Pallas iron—Russia's first meteorite, by H. Pedersen. Copenhagen, Denmark: Books-on-Demand, 2017. \$25, 2017, (ISBN-13: 9788771702132).


This book is an exhaustive catalog of information on a meteorite the author is absolutely infatuated with, Krasnojarsk or the Pallas Iron. No fact or figure is too trivial for inclusion in the book, and there are an overwhelming number of facts and figures here, most presented in note form with little introduction or explanation.

The text starts with three pages on early history of the meteorite, then a page on pallasites, and five on the early reports about the native iron. Then there are four pages on the main mass and four on “early movers,” portraits and biographies of 30 men who feature in the meteorite’s history, listed alphabetically as in an encyclopedia. This section is followed by a short account of how it was established that meteorites were extraterrestrial. Then there are sections on the distribution of fragments across Europe, and 24 “historic images” of the meteorite, mostly small black-and-white engravings. These are followed by a largely photographic record of some fieldwork performed between 1978 and 1981, and a section of some “recent findings.” Here Pederson reveals “for the first time” the name of the person who actually transported the iron from its find site and he reports that a camera obscura was used to help produce drawings for Pallas’s report of his travels. Before the appendices there are five pages of notes and there are sections consisting of about 180 “modern” photographs of Krasnojarsk and 11 pages showing and describing labels used for the many fragments. By and large, the figures are small and of poor quality.

Of the 250 pages, 153 consist of three appendices entitled “Pre-Discovery,” “Early Works,” and “Post-Chladni.” These consist of a collection, also in encyclopedia format, of what appears to be notes or excerpts from every publication that mentions or might indirectly mention the Pallas iron from 1680 to 2006, some in French, some in German, some in English.



The appeal of such a catalog is limited. I know that there are meteorite aficionados who buy every available book on meteorites who will want to know about this one. Then I imagine there are those who own a piece of Krasnojarsk who might like to have this plethora of information. There is no doubt that the author expended unbelievable amounts of time and energy to assemble this work and no rock was unturned in the search for every fragment of information, every reference, every image, and even every specimen label ever to be attached to the hundreds of fragments of the meteorite. It was an amazing accomplishment to draw all this information together.

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