

GENETIC FOOTPRINTS

Saxons, Vikings, and Celts

*The Genetic Roots of Britain and Ireland*¹

Bryan Sykes

New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006

Reviewed by James Joseph Sanchez

“You have read the myths about the origins of the Isles that shimmer in the background, just out of reach; stories of brave kings and treacherous villains, fantastic monsters and invincible warriors. You have heard of the ancient tales that have floated down the generations, stories that have been told and retold a thousand times around the campfire or in the flickering flame-light of the Great hall. You have also heard how they were set down by Christian monks, transcribed from the world of the spoken and the sung to the realm of the written . . .”

—Bryan Sykes, *Saxons, Vikings, and Celts*, p. 277

“This is the first book to be written about the genetic history of Britain and Ireland using DNA as its main source of information” (p. 1). With these simple words Bryan Sykes begins his genuinely remarkable and valuable study of the genetics of the British and Irish people, a community of 60 million people living in those Isles and some 150 million scattered over the rest of the world, based on some 50,000 DNA samples (p. 113), weaving the ancient, medieval, and modern history of each area as the basis for mapping their genetic composition. This ancient community, augmented by in-migrations of their cousins, has inhabited the region continuously for at least 12,000 years, since the end of the last Ice Age. The book addresses only the native, indigenous peoples of the Isles, and presents the research of a

¹ Published in England as *The Blood of the Isles: Exploring the Genetic Roots of Our Tribal History* (London: Bantam Press, 2006).

genetic project that does not include Bangladeshis, Nigerians, Semites, Somalis, Jamaicans, Pakistanis, Moroccans, and other recent settler colonialist populations of multicultural Britain and Ireland.

Sykes begins with the Cheddar Man, who died in a cave in Somerset 9,000 years ago: Cheddar Man's descendants include the local teacher Adrian Targett, who lives some 300 meters down the road. He sketches the mythic histories of (mainly) British identity, the Roman centuries, and the rise of the Saxons (and the myth of Saxon extermination and replacement of the Celts).

Sadly, he pauses for a moment to denounce Saxon racial supremacy for rewriting the Magna Carta as a "declaration of Saxon independence" (p. 39), for victimizing Blacks, and for the Holocaust.² He ends his review of the mythic origins mawkishly, with the "smoke rising from the chimneys of Belsen and Dachau, Treblinka and Auschwitz" (p. 43), presumably from the modern, smokeless crematoria at those camps. Although it is easy to understand why he writes this, it is always sad to see the grimly necessary ritual of European self-abasement degrade fine intellectual products like this book and many others.³ Sadly, to do science nowadays, a person of European descent

² One wonders how Sykes would interpret another instance of the censorship and rewriting of the Magna Carta in which the clauses relating to the protection of the people from Jewish organized crime and Jewish lobbying of the King for privileges have been rewritten by replacing the word "Jews" with the word "landlords." Such censorship of the Magna Carta is widespread in American institutions, including the National Archives and the State of California, and pervades American schools and universities. I am indebted to the European-American civil rights activist Elena Haskins for this discovery.

³ Consider J. P. Mallory's *In Search of the Indo-Europeans: Language, Archeology and Myth* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1989). This fine overview of the prehistory of the Indo-Europeans is degraded by the bizarre claims that demonstrate his hatred of modern Europeans as racists: "The myth of Aryan supremacy One hardly need emphasize that the implementation of Aryan supremacy by the Nazis was wholly inconsistent with Aryan as a linguistic term; Yiddish is as much an Indo-European language as any other German dialect, while Romany-speaking Gypsies had a far better claim to the title of Aryans than any North European . . ." (p. 269). That Mallory did not believe this is proven by the complete neglect of what these few sentences insist are the most important peoples and languages of the Indo-Europeans. What is one to believe, a ritual obeisance of three sentences, or three hundred pages of scholarship?

Also consider Richard Dawkins, *The Ancestors's Tale: A Pilgrimage to the Dawn of Life* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004). In the midst of talking about protostomes, he abruptly launches into a denunciation of "bigots" who use the term

must apologize for Auschwitz.

Then Sykes turns to the modern Celtic revival and the Victorian scientific studies of the peoples of the British Isles, an unflinching process that gradually eroded the ideology of Saxon supremacy and provided the groundwork for Sykes' own study. He begins with Saxon supremacists whose open racism against the Celts in Ireland envisioned a project of extermination and resettlement like that of the Zionists in Palestine (p. 60). (Sykes does not note that the most extreme formulations of this ideology were to be found among the British Israelites who would in time become the kind of Christian-Zionists who dominate British politics today.) John Beddoe would classify the "races" of Britain by eye and hair color (a map of his famous results, c. 1885, appears at p. 72). In the twentieth century encyclopedic compilations of blood type data (and so rh factor data) would be assembled. Ireland has the highest rate of O blood in Europe and the lowest rates of A (p. 87). The large genetic component of Irish (women) in the settlement of Iceland by the Norse makes it more similar to Ireland in blood type than to Norway (pp. 88-89).

Attempts to over-interpret data from blood types were common. By

"The Jew" instead of "Jews" (although he does criticize Affirmative Action on the same basis that he disagreed with apartheid in South Africa [p. 340] he does not criticize apartheid in Israel). This is the only use of the word "bigot" in the book. Relying on Lewontin (p. 338), he argues that race is meaningless, ignores the fact that the government of Israel on its websites asserts that Jews are a race, and pretends that "we" are now intermarrying across racial lines (p. 332), but Dawkins married a White woman. Notably, a citation to Dawkins' outrage about the putative bigotry against Jews does not appear in his index. In his sources he prefers the discredited Zionist Stephen Gould to E. O. Wilson four to one and never cites Richard Lynn or Philippe Rushton in his discussion of race (again, a discussion hidden amongst the protostomes).

Dawkins also relies on Stephen Pinker, who is best known recently for his lecture at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research at the Center for Jewish History on December 1, 2005, in New York (moderated by Noah Feldman, the Orthodox Jew who wrote the Iraqi constitution and election laws that created so much misery there) that characterized the Ashkenazi as racially superior, because of their putative high IQs, and the natural rulers of mankind. See, for example, Maggie Wittlin, "Jews on Jews: Jews Are Great" (SeedMagazine.com), which notes the lecture on Ashkenazi racial superiority was attended by few racially inferior "goys." Typically, Wittlin sneers that the inferior races will misinterpret the words of their Jewish racial superiors. Steve Sailer's report on the lecture notes that Pinker argues that Jews have always been victimized by their uncomprehending racial inferiors (istev.e.blogspot.com).

contrast, DNA studies can provide that data: Mitochondrial DNA (mDNA), 16,589 base pairs in length (p. 102), provides the genetic history of women, and Y-chromosome DNA (with only 27 functioning genes) provides the genetic history of men (pp. 98–99).

Tracing mutations in mDNA leads back to single mothers who were the progenitors of their entire clans: There are 36 such maternal clans worldwide. Sykes identifies seven maternal clans that comprise fully 95 percent of native Europeans and dates them by the rate of mutations in their mDNA (mostly during the end of the last ice age), and locates them in “homelands” in which they have the most mutations, identified by letters: group H: Helena (20,000 years old in southern France); T, Tara (17,000 years old in northern Italy); J, Jasmine (10,000 years old in Syria); X, Xenia (25,000 years old in the Caucasus); V, Velda (17,000 years old in northwest Spain); K, Katrine (15,000 years old in northern Italy); and U, Ursula (45,000 years old in Greece) (clans, p. 105; age, p. 106; locus, p. 107).⁴ The Ulrike clan, recently from Scandinavia and Eastern Europe, but originating in the steppes of Russia and Ukraine 25,000 years ago (p. 275), is almost as numerous as the Veldans in the Isles (p. 118). The Wanda clan, also from the steppes of Russia/Ukraine, but only 18,000 years old, is also to be found in the Isles in small numbers (p. 275).

There are similarly 21 paternal clans worldwide, eight paternal clans that predominate in Europe, and five in the British Isles and Ireland: Oisín (pronounced Osheen), Wodan, Sigurd, Eshu, and Re (pp. 119, 157). Happily, the study of the five basic paternal lines in the Isles is simplified by a second fast mutation series, a sort of stammer in the reiteration of short DNA sequences. There are dozens of loci on the Y-chromosome where these stammers take place at the rate of about one per 1,500 years (p. 158).⁵

Sykes turns to Ireland, beginning his legendary, historical, and genetic histories of the regions of the British Isles. (Ireland has long been the center of an intensive research program into Irish cultural and

⁴ Sykes discussed these seven clans in detail in his *Seven Daughters of Eve: The Science That Reveals Our Genetic Ancestry* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2001).

⁵ Sykes describes the “quintessential” stammer sequence he compiled at ten loci as “11-24-13-13-12-14-12-12-10-16,” found among the men of the Orkney islands, Basques, Galicians, and the Oisín clan in Ireland. Sykes calls it the Atlantis chromosome, but it is generally known as the Atlantic Modal Haplotype (AMH) (p. 162).

genetic history through the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin,⁶ and has the most thorough data collection [p. 147].) The oldest site of human presence in Ireland is that of Mount Sandel, some 9,000 years ago, in the Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age), the period between the end of the Ice Age and the rise of agriculture (pp. 136–37). At that time, Ireland and England were still attached to the continent. The earliest settlers simply walked along the coastline to Ireland from Spain.

Some 7,500 years ago, Neolithic agricultural communities of the Jasmine clan settled the coastlines, apparently living in small numbers and in close proximity to larger non-agricultural hunter-gatherer populations. (The “Ocean Branch” traveled along the Mediterranean coastlines, and the “Land Branch” moved through the Balkans, marked by single mutations [pp. 212, 274].) The introduction of agriculture, other than through the appearance of small agricultural villages, did not significantly change the population, and the great monuments of ancient Ireland, sites like Knowth and Newgrange, some 5,000 years ago, are products of the mesolithic peoples that predated and ultimately absorbed the less numerous agricultural settlers (pp. 143–44).

The study of the Ursula clan found that a range of mutations existed among them that would have required approximately as long a time as the whole clan existed. Since Ireland can only have been inhabited about 9,000 years, this argues that the mutations existed among the clan before it settled in Ireland and implies that native Europeans are indeed Europeans. This created fierce controversy among Judeocentric prehistorians whose reconstructions are ultimately based on the Old Testament (Sykes is too polite to point this out), but further research did confirm that almost all native Europeans come from Europe and not the Middle East (pp. 152–54).

A careful analysis of the many strands of the Ursula clan⁷ brought

⁶ The question of Irish identity has been hard fought in recent years. The Coalition Against the Deportation of Irish Children (CADIC), a coalition of illegal immigrants, anarchists, Israelis, and Jewish “race experts” like *Race Traitor* editor Noel Ignatieff, called for passage of a referendum that would make “Irish children,” that is the children of failed asylum seekers (such as Congolese, Moroccans, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, etc.), anchor babies for bringing in entire clans or tribes into Ireland. The referendum was soundly defeated by the Irish people, who understood that their own children were the true Irish children.

⁷ Sykes notes one strange strand: “One Irish Ursulan, a lady from Donegal, for example, had only one matching sequence and that was a man from the Czech Re-

Sykes to conclude that they had been in Ireland an average of 7,300 years (plus or minus a thousand years) (p. 155). All the clans arrived from 7,500 to 4,500 years ago, most clustered in the 5,000 to 6,000 year range, with the youngest being the farmers, Jasmines, 4,500 years ago (p. 156). Some 80 percent of Irish men are of the paternal clan of Oisín, rising from 73 percent in Leinster, to 81 percent in Ulster, 95 percent in Munster, and 98 percent in Connacht (p. 160). (There is, at the same time, little difference in the distribution of maternal clans in these four provinces [p. 161].) The lower rates of Oisín correspond with historic areas of Anglo-Norman settlement (pp. 160–61). His data was anomalous for the arrival date of the Oisín: nominally only 1,200 years (p. 163). Further study would be required to understand what was going on in the timeline of the Y-chromosome.

Sykes then turns to Scotland. Noting the rugged topography and the suggested Mesolithic population of 5,000 for all the British Isles (p. 170), he describes the impressive ruins of the Skara Brae site in Orkney (pp. 171–72). Skara Brae is surrounded by burial mounds, the Newgrange-like passage tomb of Maes Howe, and standing stones. Orkney is also the home of successive settlements of Vikings. Norn, a hybrid Norse/Scots language was spoken there until the end of the eighteenth century (p. 175).

Noting the survival of hundreds of brochs, stone towers built 2,000 years ago by the Picts, Sykes turns to the question of who the Picts were. Rejecting the claims that the Picts spoke a non-Indo-European language (p. 181), he notes they probably spoke a strand of Gaelic (pp. 181–82). The men of the Shetland Islands, proud of their Viking heritage, are about 60 percent Oisín and 40 percent Wodan and Sigurd (p. 192). (Bergen, Norway, is about 15 percent Oisín and the remainder split between Wodan and Sigurd [p. 193].) Taking this into account, the Shetland men are about 42 percent Viking and Orkney men about 37 percent. Verifying old accounts of settlement, Iceland shows signs of colonization by Viking men and Irish women, with men two-thirds Viking and one-third Irish and Scots, but women one-third Viking and two-thirds Irish and Scots (p. 195). But the Shetlands and Orkneys show the same percentages of Viking Y-chromosome and mDNA,

public. It is very unlikely we will ever know the precise tracks that trace the wanderings of the ancestors of these two genetic relatives back to the women whose DNA they both share. But it is in just these tracks, like footprints in the sands of time, that we can read the signals from the past" (pp. 154–55).

suggesting that the islands were peacefully settled by Scandinavian men and women. The Y-chromosome clan structures of the Grampian and Tayside/Fife regions (what Sykes terms "Pictland") had no exotic genes from the Picts. The Picts were genetically similar to the people of Ireland: 84 percent Oisín in Grampian, 12 percent Wodan in Grampian, and 18 percent in Tayside/Fife (p. 203). The Celtic west of Scotland, known to have had Viking settlements in Skye and the Western Isles, has 22 percent Norse Y-chromosomes and 11 percent Norse mDNA, declining to 7 percent Norse Y-chromosomes and 2 percent Norse mDNA in Argyll (p. 207). The Hebrides are different, with a young sub-clan of Taras, Jasmines, and the highest concentration of Katrines on Lewis (p. 213).

The prehistory of Wales is poorly known, but its history of resistance to the larger populations of England, whether of Romans or their successors, is attested by genetic evidence. For example, mDNA reveals 47 percent are of the Helena maternal clan. Despite records of Viking raids and Norman settlement, there just three men of Sigurd in the north, not one in the south, and only a certain Mr. Jones in mid-Wales. There is a very ancient cluster of Wodan (with mutations that suggest it is indigenous to the locale) (pp. 238-39). And Wales is dominated by the Oisín, reaching 86 percent in mid-Wales, albeit with a lower than expected rate of Y-chromosome mutations (pp. 240-41).

Sykes turns finally to England. The 49 million native people of England began to settle the land at the end of the last Ice Age, some 12,000 years ago, and grew in numbers after the cold snap of the Younger Dryas some 10,000 years ago (p. 242). The Mesolithic peoples erected the megaliths of Stonehenge and Avebury (p. 244). And thousands of years of turbulent history later, a complex genetic mosaic has been laid across the land. Helena is a major clan on both sides of the Dane-law: from 43 percent in East Anglia and 47 percent in north England, rising to 49 percent in south England (p. 247). The Jasmines are peppered along the coasts, mainly Ocean Jasmines, but in the East a few Land Jasmines (p. 274). There are also minor clan populations of Wanda, Xenia, and Ulrike in East Anglia (pp. 274-75). The Oisín clan declines to 51 percent in East Anglia (rising as one travels west) and Wodan reaches its highest levels in the Isles there. There are almost no Sigurds in East Anglia (p. 275).

The first conclusion is that every person of the native peoples of the Isles has two completely different histories embodied in their genes.

The maternal line is ancient and continuous, and probably goes back all the way to the very first Paleolithic and Mesolithic settlers some 10,000 years ago (pp. 280–82). The ancient maternal clans have been overlain by large settlements of new women in only two places: (1) by Viking women in Orkney (30 percent) and Shetland (40 percent); and (2) in northern and eastern England above the Danelaw (5 percent in the east to 10 percent in the north) (pp. 282–83). Although it is fundamentally impossible to sort Saxons, Danes, and Normans on a genetic basis, these were probably Viking women again (p. 283). The presence of both Atlantis and Ocean Jasmine maternal clans along the coasts from Spain to Ireland and the Western Isles records a continuous flow of families and their genes along the coastline so long ago, paralleling the myth of the arrival of the Milesians from Iberia. The Celts of the Isles are a very ancient indigenous people, and were not Central European Celtic invaders, since there appears to be no genetic connection between these two Celtic peoples (p. 281). The mysterious Picts, long believed to be a mysterious relict population, are now revealed to be Celts, arising from the same Iberian-European mesolithic population as other Celts (p. 282). There is only the tiniest “dusting” of exotic maternal clans: in southern England, two from sub-Saharan Africa and three from Syria or Jordan; and one person with a Sub-Saharan African sequence from Stornoway in the Western Isles, all among people with no knowledge of how they could have such genes. Perhaps they are the only maternal survival of genes brought by Roman slaves (p. 283). All other maternal clans in the Isles are native Celts.

All the Isles are dominated by the Oishin clan and its Atlantis form, ranging from Iberia to the northern islands. There are pockets of Wodens in mid-Wales and Pictland regions, and these are probably echoes of the very first Mesolithic settlers (pp. 284–85). Their age is, paradoxically, denoted by their lack of mutations, since while most women reproduce (and hence maternal clans are stable and long-lived), most Y-chromosomes derive from a few very reproductively successful men. So, there are some 200,000 men descended from Somerled, the Celtic hero who drove the Norse earls of Orkney out of Argyll and the Hebrides (p. 213). Similarly, in some parts of Ireland, one quarter of men have the Y-chromosome from the Ui Neill (High King) Niall Noigiallach (p. 215). (Researchers have found that fully 16 million men have the Y-chromosome of Genghis Khan, because he and his descendents slaughtered the men of conquered peoples and

incorporated conquered women into massive harems [p. 126].) The clan of Oisín dominates every part of the Isles, with the Saxons or Danes at 10 percent in southern England, rising to 15 percent above the Danelaw, with only about 2 percent being Normans even in southern England (p. 286). Centuries of Roman rule left no unambiguous genetic presence (pp. 286–87).

Sykes' appendices includes four tables summarizing the distribution of maternal and paternal clans in Scotland, England, and Wales, illustrated by nine maps of the distribution of maternal clans and six maps illustrating the distribution of paternal clans. The UK edition of the book's website, www.bloodoftheisles.net, includes pdf files⁸ that provide the data for the maternal clans⁹ and paternal clans.¹⁰ A link to Sykes' genetic analysis company, Oxford Ancestors, includes the MatriMap¹¹ illustrating the worldwide distribution of maternal clans, appearing to emerge, not Out-Of-Africa, but rather from Rafah Refugee Camp in the Gaza Strip. (Happily, the Matrimap illustrates the ancient settlement of North America from Europe in Mesolithic times.)

Sykes reflects on what all this means in an aside at the end of Chapter 6:

I recently tested the DNA of our Vice-Chancellor, the executive head of Oxford University – I rarely travel anywhere without my DNA sampling brush – and discovered that he and I are not only in the same clan of Tara, but have exactly the same mDNA sequence 126, 292, 294. This means that as well as a common ancestor 17,000 years ago in Tara herself, we must share a much more recent maternal ancestor. I don't know who that is, but the point of the story is that, for better or worse, I feel now very differently about the Vice-Chancellor. So much so that, were we to have a severe disagreement, it would be hard for me to take it quite so seriously. It would be like arguing with my cousin. (p. 109)

Sykes concludes with a lyrical invocation of the common ancestry of the people of the Isles, singing: "What does it matter to me, you

⁸ www.bloodoftheisles.net/results.html

⁹ OGAP_mDNA.pdf, 39 pages.

¹⁰ OGAP_yDNA.pdf, 28 pages.

¹¹ www.oxfordancestors.com/service_matrimap.html

might say, whether my ancestor was a Viking, or a Saxon, or a Celt?" (p. 278). "However we may feel about ourselves and about each other, we are genetically rooted in a Celtic past. The Irish, the Welsh, and the Scots know this, but the English sometimes think otherwise. But, just a little way beneath the surface, the strands of ancestry weave us all together as the children of a common past. . . . It is our own genetic ancestry that is the most important. It is the thread that goes back to our own deep roots that means the most" (p. 287). And not just for the people of the Isles, for the cousins of the nine clans of Europe are one intertwined people, with rich common strands of ancestry that are 45,000 years deep, that include the children's hand prints on the walls of Rouffignac Cave in southern France some 30,000 years ago¹² and the footsteps on the Moon, and a common future in Europe and its daughter lands, together, if we are to have any future at all.¹³

Read this book. And give copies to your cousins.

James Joseph Sanchez, Ph.D. (Middle East Studies); former editor, Middle East Abstracts (1986–2002); editor, Nuremberg War Crimes Trials (CD-ROM) (1995); and current editor of Al-Qaeda & Jihadi Movements Worldwide (Vols. 1–26), Who's Who in Al-Qaeda & Jihadi Movements Worldwide and Who's Who in the Aztlan Movement.

¹² Bruce Bower, "Children of Prehistory: Stone Age Kids Left Their Mark On Cave Art and Stone Tools," in *Science News*, April 28, 2007, pp. 264–66. Many of the prehistoric patterned lines and hand prints in European caves are those of ancient children.

¹³ Genetic data will transform the writing of history and prehistory, and works that exclude genetic data are now obsolete before they are printed. One good example of this is David W. Anthony's *The Horse, the Wheel, and Language: How Bronze-Age Riders From The Eurasian Steppes Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007). Admirable for its intelligent handling of masses of Soviet and Russian archeology in parsing the origins of Indo-European-speaking peoples, Anthony's decision to exclude genetic data is not dignified by his tireless denunciation of all European peoples as racists (see pp. 5, 8–11, 465, 475, ch. 5 n1). For Anthony, even to suggest that there are real Indo-European-speaking European peoples at any time or place is racist.