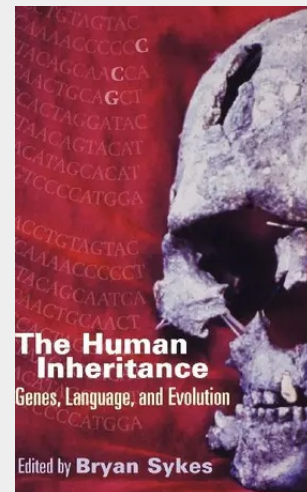


The Human Inheritance

Genes, Languages, and Evolution

Very little excites human curiosity quite so much as contemplating human origins. More than any other branch of science, evolution - and human evolution in particular - is fraught with controversy. Working from what is essentially the same data, schools of opinion have come to diametrically opposed conclusions. Are we adapted Neanderthals, or a new species altogether which wiped them out? Did the first Americans enter the continent 30,000 or 12,000 years ago? Did the Polynesians sail against wind and current to an unknown fate, or were they just blown across from South America while out fishing? Why do we speak different languages? Is it because language traces our biological history, or are the two things completely unrelated? Evolution, because it deals with a past that can never conclusively be known, was once ideal material for perpetual debate. Enter genetics with a completely new source of objective data. Surely these old questions would soon be settled one way or another. Or would they? Bryan Sykes brings together a world-class set of contributors to debate these questions. The result is eight lively essays, each of which offers a different opinion about what the links between genes, language, and the archaeological record can tell us about human evolution - and indeed, whether they can tell us anything conclusive at all. This stimulating and challenging book poses more questions than it offers answers, eschews jargon, and pursues controversy. Guaranteed to fascinate anyone who has ever wondered how the fossil record, the incredible diversity of human language, and our genetic inheritance might combine to give a glimpse of human origins.

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179,70 €

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Lieferfrist: bis zu 10 Tage

Artikelnummer: 9780198502746

Medium: Buch

ISBN: 978-0-19-850274-6

Verlag: OUP Oxford

Erscheinungstermin: 25.11.1999

Sprache(n): Englisch

Auflage: Erscheinungsjahr 1999

Produktform: Gebunden

Gewicht: 436 g

Seiten: 208

Format (B x H): 145 x 222 mm

