



## **My European Family: The First 54,000 Years (Bloomsbury Sigma)**

*Karin Bojs*

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## **My European Family: The First 54,000 Years (Bloomsbury Sigma) Karin Bojs**

Karin Bojs grew up in a small, broken family. At her mother's funeral she felt this more keenly than ever. As a science journalist she was eager to learn more about herself, her family and the interconnectedness of society. After all, we're all related. And in a sense, we are all family.

*My European Family* tells the story of Europe and its people through its genetic legacy, from the first wave of immigration to the present day, weaving in the latest archaeological findings. Karin goes deep in search of her genealogy; by having her DNA sequenced she was able to trace the path of her ancestors back through the Viking and Bronze ages to the Neolithic and beyond into prehistory, even back to a time when Neanderthals ran the European show. Travelling to dozens of countries to follow the story, she learns about early farmers in the Middle East and flute-playing cavemen in Germany and France, and a whole host of other fascinating characters.

This book looks at genetics from a uniquely pan-European perspective, with the author meeting dozens of geneticists, historians and archaeologists in the course of her research. The genes of this seemingly ordinary modern European woman have a truly fascinating story to tell, and in many ways it is the true story of Europe. At a time when politics is pushing nations apart, this book shows that, ultimately, our genes will always bind us together.

## **My European Family: The First 54,000 Years (Bloomsbury Sigma) Details**

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## From Reader Review My European Family: The First 54,000 Years (Bloomsbury Sigma) for online ebook

### Jukka Joonas says

Helt suveränt. Bland det bästa jag läst på länge. Intressant och bra skrivet. Dessutom vann Karin Bojs Augustpriset med boken :)

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### Izabelle Holmgren says

Så jäkla intressant bok!!! Något som alla rasister skulle må bra av att läsa.

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### Berit Lundqvist says

The deputy speaker of the Swedish Parliament, the Sweden Democrat Björn Söder, has for the second time started a debate about who is Swedish and who is not. According to himself, he of course is a pure breed, but Samis and Jews are not.

Well, dear Björn, I'm sorry to inform you that none of us are pure breeds. We're all Africans, spiced up with a little Neanderthal.

The first "Swedes" were hunters, and they arrived from the European continent just after the last deglaciation, more than 10,000 years ago. Their hair and skin were dark, and their eyes probably blue.

A couple of thousand years later the first light skinned and brown-eyed farmers arrived from - wait for it - Syria. How does that make you feel, Björn? Having Syrian genes, I mean?

Then, about 5,000 years ago a new wave of indoeuropean immigrants came from Central Asia. You know, Björn, those people you think are superior to others.

What about the Samis then? The first arrived from northeast just after the deglaciation. Then there was a second immigration wave between 2,000 and 3,000 years ago. Numerous groups have come since then. All have lived side by side and exchanged genes with each other.

And Björn, if I may ask a personal question: My very blonde and blue-eyed aunt, who has converted to Judaism - is she a real Swede?

Lesson learned: When cultures meet and interact generally great progress is made.

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### Jennopenny says

Bra och personlig släkthistoria.  
Tyckte mer om början då mycket kändes nytt för mig.

Blev småsugen på att börja släktforska men kom sen på att det skulle föra mig till ryska arkiv. Är en redo för byråkrati.

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### **Alain says**

Me ha gustado mucho. No me parece que Bojs escriba particularmente bien y, además, en muchas ocasiones se echan en falta transiciones más suaves entre tema y tema, ya que a veces opta por cortar bruscamente y pasar a otra cosa sin buscar una conexión más o menos explícita entre las cosas que trata. Pero bueno, que a pesar de eso me ha interesado muchísimo por su contenido.

Básicamente es una historia de los últimos 50.000 años de la raza humana basándose en teorías que ya conocemos y que se encarga de demostrar mediante la genética, insistiendo en el valor que tiene esta ciencia para la antropología y otras disciplinas académicas.

El libro está estructurado en tres partes alrededor de las cuales gira todo su contenido: la llegada de los cazadores recolectores a Europa desde África, la llegada posterior de la agricultura gracias a migrantes de zonas de la actual Siria y finalmente la llegada a nuestro continente de las tribus indoeuropeas.

Además, está lleno de reflexiones sobre el papel que debe jugar la genética en la sociedad contemporánea, el que debe jugar en otras ciencias y sobre cómo la ciencia y la política deben ser completamente independientes y se debe huir de las interpretaciones forzadas de la primera por parte de la segunda para justificar una hipotética inferioridad o superioridad de unos genes sobre otros que resume en la idea de que todos los seres humanos actuales, sin excepción, descendemos de un antepasado femenino común que vivió hace 200.000 años, por lo que al final venimos del mismo sitio.

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### **Cecilia says**

Inte så imponerad. Alltför mycket detaljer som bara är intressanta för författaren själv. Dessutom en hel del motsägelser t.ex. vad gäller våra kusiner Neandertalarna. Å ena sidan utgår författaren från att det är självklart att Homo Sapiens utrotade Neandertalarna, å andra sidan utgår hon från att hybrider uppkommit genom att Neandertalare våldtagit Homo Sapiens-kvinnor. Jag finner det märkligt, fördomsfullt och helt ologiskt. Jag tror inte sådana fördomar har stöd i forskning och därför ser jag inte denna bok som pålitlig för den mer forskningsintresserade. Visst medger författaren att hon blandar forskning med sina egna tankar, men ärligt talat; för mig är inte den bland-genren särskilt intressant.

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### **Michael Bafford says**

This was very interesting. It seems that DNA research is answering questions deemed unanswerable not that long ago. It also raises at least as many new questions, but hey, that's science.

We are all descended from Mitochondrial Eve who lived in Africa about 200,000 years ago. Before Eve people were not like us; were not "modern" humans, not homo-sapiens. I find it intriguing to wonder what triggered the mutation that gave Eve that slight advantage which, in the end, won out over every other human type. I happened across a lecture on You-tube where the answer was aliens. Not that surprising, I suppose. Maybe it was God, or an accident?

This story hops forward a bit to 54,000 years ago when some of our ancestors somewhere in the middle east were raped - probably - by Neanderthals. Or maybe they were just into beefy guys. I find it exciting to learn that I have at least 2% Neanderthal in me; as does everybody else.

What was also interesting was how, with DNA technique, it is possible to trace the invasion of Europe. The native Europeans - the Neanderthals - disappeared shortly thereafter. Shortly, in a relative, prehistory, perspective. They had been living here already for over 200,000 years when we arrived, but...

A second wave of emigrants left the fertile crescent and came wandering up into Europe about 9,000 years ago, bringing bronze, farming, farm animals, ceramics and cats. Archaeologists would apparently rather not believe that farming was brought by immigrants; assuming rather that the knowledge was passed on culturally, but dead men tell the tale. Actually, it's mostly dead women. I learned more about DNA here than I really wanted to know, but it probably did me good.

And a final wave of immigrants - invaders? - came from the East a mere 5,000 years ago, probably in better boats, riding on horses and speaking an Indo-European language.

There are some things I take issue with. Ms. Bojs' interpretation of a rock carving from Vitlycke in which she sees a man holding a hammer, with a lightning bolt in front of him, riding in a cart pulled by a horse, for example. I can't say I see it that way. Another interpretation is that the cart is drawn by a goat - compare the Thor mythology. To me the lightning bolt looks like a snake, the hammer seems just to be a disfigured hand and the man seems to have antlers. But what do I know. I have always thought the "boats" look like sledges. That men were generally erect seems pretty certain - and that girls wore pony-tails is for sure.

The personal side of the story with Ms. Bojs' travels and meetings was a nice change from the hard facts. And at times I find her insights enlightening. As in the chapter "The Mothers" discussing Dawkins: The Selfish Gene. "Rather than "selfish genes" I would like to speak of "double genes". Genes may be good or bad, depending on the environment in which they occur. They can lead to mental illness or great creativity. To ample flesh that allows survival in an austere environment but a risk for overweight when food is in abundance. Hyper-sensitivity to impressions helps the hunter discover the prey, but can be devastating in classrooms and offices. What is good and bad depends on the combination and the context. (p. 414-15, translation by Google and me).

The book also contains tips to museums and ancient sites and caves. Recommended to all students of human history.

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## **Nuria Castaño monllor says**

La exposición es un tanto caótica. En realidad he tenido la impresión de estar leyendo un panel explicativo tras otro en un museo tras otro.

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## **Mikko Saari says**

If you don't know anything about using DNA to track the historical movement of people, goods and ideas, here's a good place to start. Karin Bojs is an experienced science journalist and writes well - her look into the

development of what Europeans are and where they came from is both personal and universal.

The essence of it is clear: Europeans are all immigrants, in the end, a mixture of hunter-gatherers who arrived first, the farmers who arrived later and the steppe nomads who were the last to arrive. Mix in some Neanderthal blood in it, and there you go, the variety of Europeans who live in Europe today.

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## Girl says

Bardzo ciekawe + bardzo dobrze opracowane wydanie polskie (przypisy redaktora naukowego!).

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## Erika says

Karin Bojs skriver om Europas befolkning, varifrån den kommit och hur den rört sig över kontinenten. Den personliga touchen med inslag av hennes egen DNA-släktforskning fungerar som en ram som gör det här lika mycket till en berättelse som en populärvetenskaplig bok. Det märks att Bojs är en van vetenskapsjournalist – Min europeiska familj är hela tiden lättillgänglig och informativ. Och så intressant! På ett märkligt sätt känner jag samhörighet med dessa människor som levde för tiotusentals år sedan, dessa tidiga människor som skapade konst och gjorde musik, som tyckte om att slå sig ner på platser med kvällssol och utsikt över vatten. Människor som reste långa sträckor innan moderna fortskaffningsmedel var uppfunna. Människor som levde på områden som idag ligger under vatten, eller färdades med båt över områden som numera rest sig ur havet. Vi tror vi är så unika – men vi är det inte. Vi är delar av en bred väv som rör sig genom årtusenden och kontinenter.

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## Marie-Paule says

An amazing book about how modern DNA techniques contribute to anthropological and (pre-)historical research. DNA-research tells us that the European population is the result of three important migration waves:

- a) a migration of hunters-gatherers (coming from Africa) as a result of the ice ages;
- b) agriculture is not a result of a naturally occurring 'evolution' in several populations of hunters. Agriculture arose at one specific time in one specific area, viz. the surroundings of Syria. Once farmers needed more farming land, they started to migrate from the 'south to the north' (6000 BC.);
- c) around 2800 BC, large groups of shepherds migrated from the drylands in the east (Russia etc). Here, DNA-research is in line with the findings of linguistic studies (Indo-European languages).

These are the three main immigration waves, but of course, a lot of economical and political factors have added additional 'layers' to this general picture, e.g. the Vikings coming to Western Europe. Even in prehistorical eras, commerce and ships have played a far more important role in the development of Europe, than I could have imagined.

This book also gives an interesting insight in the appearance of dogs, horses and cats in human existence.

And last but not least, the author makes some interesting ethical remarks about do's and don'ts when we are dealing with genetic research in an anthropological setting.

I dare to recommend this book to my fellow GR-friends !

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### **Linda Nordgren says**

Mycket lättläst och informativt.

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### **Joy says**

I won this ARC through a Goodreads giveaway!

Reading about Ms Bojs scientific journey as she traces her ancestry was very interesting and detailed, though sometimes I found myself a bit overwhelmed by the amount of information given (not boring at all, just a little above my head at times).

Overall, I am glad I read this book, and my interest in genealogy has peaked a bit.

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### **Kristina Svensson says**

Jag plockade upp denna tillsammans med en hög med sommardeckare och feelgood. Detta är boken som jag fastnade snabbast i. Karin Bojs blandar personliga funderingar med intervjuer av ledande forskare på ett sätt som ger historien driv.

Något jag tar med mig är hur olika discipliner kan berika varandra. Data från geologer, lingvister, genetiker och arkeologer ger en bättre bild av vår förhistoria jämfört med när var och en ska tolka data i sitt fält.

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