Anomalous Native American DNA: New Tests Show Middle East Origins?

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Participants in Dr. Donald Yates's Cherokee Native American DNA testing. Top Left: Karen Worstell's grandmother Odessa Shields Cox is shown with her husband William M. Cox and Worstell's mother, Ethel, as a baby, ca. 1922. Bottom Left: Karen Worstell. Right: Jan Franz. (Courtesy of Dr. Donald Yates)

Fossil Suggests Egyptian Pyramids and Sphinx Once Submerged Under Sea Water

The universe is full of mysteries that challenge our current knowledge. In "Beyond Science" Epoch Times collects stories about these strange phenomena to stimulate the imagination and open up previously undreamed of possibilities. Are they true? You decide.

Geneticist Dr. Donald Yates has been studying Cherokee DNA, particularly genetic markers passed on only from a mother to her children, not passed on along paternal lines. Anomalies in Native American DNA are often dismissed as signs of racial admixture after colonization, the anomalies are not attributed to the origins of Native peoples.

Yates chose to focus on the maternal line to make it easier to filter out any colonial-era admixture. It was far more common for male colonists to mate with Native American women than it was for female colonists to mate with Native American men when the Old World first met the New.

To further rule out admixture in his test results, Yates combined genetic testing with genealogical records where possible.

He found what he sees as strong evidence that Cherokee Native Americans have Middle Eastern ancestry—ancestry that cannot be accounted for by modern admixture, but which is rooted in the ancient origins of the people.

Native Americans are conventionally held to fit into a handful of haplogroups. The term haplogroup refers to a genetic population group stemming from a common ancestor. Haplogroup T is not among the haplogroups most geneticists recognize as Native American. Yates, however, said that it is prevalent among the Cherokee and has been for a very long time.

He wrote in his report, released earlier this month: "T is the leading haplogroup (23.1 percent), with a frequency on a par with modern-day Egyptians (23.4 percent) and Arabs (24.4 percent). T is thus a defining mark of Cherokee ancestry. ... We can safely rule out recent European admixture. As we have discussed again and again, there was no available source for a huge, sudden influx of female-mediated Middle Eastern DNA on the American frontier. Even Sephardic Jews (11 to 14 percent), many of whom were also Indian traders, could hardly have accounted for such admixture.

"Moreover, had it occurred in the colonial period or more recently, the diversity, age, and unique characteristics of the T haplotypes would not have yielded the patterns noticed in this paper. Most T's would have matched people in the Old World and we would simply be looking at an effect of migration. Instead, we have a North American branch of T with peculiar SNPs [Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms, a DNA sequence variation] which is evidently a cross-section of a very old population originating in the Old World."

In a different part of the report, he explained one way to tell if the genetic characteristics are ancient in origin, or if they could be attributed to recent admixture: "Generally, the more mutations, the more ancient the type."

While the level of the T-haplotype found across Yates's 67 Cherokee test subjects is comparable to those found in Iraqi and Iranian Jews (about 24 percent), it is far higher than that found in nearby regions where one would expect admixture. In neighboring countries in the Middle East, as well as among Jews from other regions, the frequency of T is only 4–14 percent.

An example of how Dr. Yates combined genetic testing with genealogical research is the case of Kathleen Rogalla.

Mother of Kathleen Rogalla, Ethel Estell Caywood Christian, ca. 1930. (Courtesy of Dr. Donald Yates)

Kathleen Rogalla of Panama City, Fla. is descended from Deborah Cook(e), wife of William Chisholm (born 1720 in Amelia County, Va.). Cook is her ancestor in an unbroken female line. A woman named Amy or Annie (no last name) was Cook's mother. Yates wrote, "It is unlikely Amy or Annie was the daughter of an Englishwoman ... around the time of first intermarriages."

Rogalla underwent genetic testing from another company, which she had sought out after taking an interest in her Native ancestry. This company told her she was of 100 percent European ancestry with no chance of being Native American. When Yates tested Rogalla, he found haplotype T in her results.

He wrote: "These historical accounts are given here in detail to document the early Cherokee affiliation of the line. More could be added. Suffice it to say that the Chisholms and all their marriage partners were well known to Cherokee leaders from the 1760s on ... All the names are well documented in Cherokee and Melungeon genealogies, as well as U.S. Indian treaties, chiefs-lists and agency records. ... There is every reason on genealogical grounds to regard her T* haplotype as Cherokee, not Eurasian."

Yates is of Cherokee descent, he has a Ph.D. in classical studies, and he founded the genetics research institution DNA Consultants. These three credentials have given him a unique perspective on Native American history as it relates to these ancient cultures, and how DNA testing can support the theoretical link. He hypothesizes that an expedition of Ptolemaic

Egyptians and others in the 3rd century B.C. sailed to North America and were the settlers from whom descended today's Cherokee Native Americans.

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