

- *Apócrifos hagiográficos: Vida de San Esteban el diácono; Martirio de Ananías.*
- *Leyendas apócrifas: Leyenda de Jesús y el rey de Tiro; Milagro de la Virgen María.*
- *Hechos y epístolas apócrifas: Historia de San Felipe el Apostol; La síndone de Jesús: correspondencia entre el rey Abgaro y Jesús.*

Basta un breve vistazo a la lista de textos. ¿Ha quedado algún aspecto por cubrir? No. Cualquier estudioso, independientemente de su ámbito de estudio (traducción, literatura, historia, arqueología, iconografía, arte, crítica textual, etc.) se sentirá tentado de su lectura. Primero, por la importancia que los textos poseen intrínsecamente; segundo, por el hecho de ser apócrifo y la singular visión que los textos de estas características tienen; tercero, por su rareza y lejanía respecto de nuestro entorno cultural; cuarto, por la dificultad de traducción, y quinto, como fuente para conocer con exactitud un mensaje que es pilar fundamental de la cultura de Occidente.

La obra concluye con una de las tareas más agotadoras y más agradecidas que el lector puede recibir, un exhaustivo índice de citas que abarcan el Antiguo Testamento, Nuevo Testamento, Apócrifos del Antiguo Testamento, Apócrifos del Nuevo Testamento, Obras rabínicas y Obras eclesiásticas. Asimismo, también se incluye un índice de autores modernos, de nombres y lugares y de materias.

Incidir aquí en la capacidad y en el sobresaliente trabajo del editor y estudioso es una redundancia para el conocedor de sus libros precedentes, que ya nos ha privilegiado en anteriores ocasiones con una lectura cuidada, un trabajo exigente y ameno que no va en detrimento de su carácter científico, sino todo lo contrario, su calidad como labor investigadora acompaña no menos que la sencillez con la que está expuesto. Ciertamente, Trotta ha acertado plenamente en dar a la luz la presente obra que, por fin, cubre ese amplio vacío que nuestra bibliografía no podía permitirse.

MAGDALENA LÓPEZ PÉREZ, MANUEL MARCOS ALDÓN

SYKES, B., *The Seven Daughters of Eve*, London: Corgi Books, 2001, 367 pp.

In this book science breathes fresh life into literature, as it throws a new light, written in an amazingly readable, colloquial style, into the hidden mysteries of our genetical history as human beings. Why should I bother reviewing a book on the latest findings of our mitochondrial DNA? Maybe because some of the burning questions urgently needing an answer to our lives as cultural human beings are the ones provided by this brilliant book written by a prominent scientist. It is Sykes, who holds a chair of genetics at the University of Oxford, and his position should be a sufficient guarantee for any disbeliever in all the thrilling scientific knowledge spread on these pages. He shows how the history of

the living world, human beings included, is recorded in the genes that trace our ancestry back into the distant past: as far back as over a hundred thousand years ago.

This is no doubt front-line research done on genetics and it obviously has brought to bear on languages spoken round the world. The original hypothesis here is that we are all connected through our mothers to only a very limited number of women –not men, I am afraid– who lived thousands of years ago and were responsible for handing down to us our genetic load of mitochondrial DNA. Sykes himself and his team of Oxford researchers have conducted over the past ten years a number of laboratory experiments with human living material and have managed to gather a DNA data bank, and so they have been able to trace some distant ancestors of specific individuals who were discovered in the last few years. The reputation of the scientific periodicals where his team's publications were printed does not allow for scorn or scepticism. This fascinating book tells the remarkable account behind the discoveries made by archaeologists and throws much light into facts that have deep implications for us all. In a time when we need so much groundwork that should bridge the gulf between natural and social sciences, this book is a good reminder of it, as it successfully shares its concern for both genetic science and social behaviour.

As far as natural languages are concerned, Sykes' findings can be fitted with some theoretical assumptions held by scholars like Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, Renfrew, Zvelevil, Greenberg, Cavalli-Sforza etc. about their Indoeuropean motherland location and dating. Not only has Oxford but also Berkeley conducted tests on mitochondrial DNA, so that they were able to put forward the widely divulgated hypothesis that has foreseen a common African Eve traceable back to some 200,000 years ago, when the first *homo sapiens sapiens* is supposed to have appeared on earth. If such was the case, then we are also bound to believe with the Russians Ilich-Svitych and Dolgopolsky that languages like Uralic, Caucasian and Semitic, far from being too distant to our IE group, they should be considered closer than most linguists would be ready to admit so far. In this new light shed by the novel DNA findings, the so called *nostratic* family (proposed by Pedersen almost one century ago) has now more sense as a plausible, not so daring idea.

As blood groups proved years ago (in spite of stubborn late readers) an unreliable test that should offer enough evidence and account for people's migrations and tribal links, the new expectations brought about by DNA analysis will hopefully provide a badly needed response to all the questions on the topic.

The specific cases told here in all detail about the Iceman of the Alps, the updated case of the Romanovs, the puzzling wanderings of South Seas peoples, the Neanderthal fate once more, the first Europeans again once more, are but a few of the redhot issues the author approaches with a secure hand and a brilliant

pen. The last chapter on the seven imaginary women, likely to have lived centuries ago as mothers of the Western races of men, is a thrilling account that I found immensely enjoyable.

I cannot recommend this book too strongly as a most pleasant reading to all University students of social sciences who normally find prehistory trite and boring. The reader-friendly spice found in bestselling publications is spilt here in large amounts.

VICENTE LÓPEZ FOLGADO