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# The 10,000 Year Explosion: How Civilization Accelerated Human Evolution

Gregory Cochran, Henry Harpending  
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"Important and fascinating . . . the provocative ideas in *The 10,000 Year Explosion* must be taken seriously by anyone who wants to understand human origins and humanity's future." —*Wall Street Journal*

## THE 10,000 YEAR EXPLOSION



HOW CIVILIZATION  
ACCELERATED  
HUMAN EVOLUTION

GREGORY COCHRAN AND HENRY HARPENDING

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#197752 in Books Gregory Cochran 2010-10-19 2010-10-19Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.20 x .69 x 6.10l, .80 #File Name: 0465020429304 pagesThe 10 000 Year Explosion How Civilization Accelerated Human Evolution | File size: 63.Mb

Gregory Cochran, Henry Harpending : The 10,000 Year Explosion: How Civilization Accelerated Human Evolution before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The 10,000 Year Explosion: How Civilization Accelerated Human Evolution:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Culture drives biological evolution  
By Max Shpak  
As the authors note in the opening chapter, the common dogma passed down by many prominent popularizers of evolutionary biology is that with the origin of anatomically modern humans, cultural evolution has completely supplanted biological evolution in our species. A corollary of the central dogma that all post-paleolithic human adaptation has been cultural rather than biological is that there are no significant biological differences between groups of people. Cochran and Harpending provide a much-needed antidote to this completely inaccurate view of human biology and history. They make a strong case that far from cultural evolution circumventing the forces of natural selection and biological evolution, cultural changes serve as a powerful impetus for genetic changes in human populations. Obvious examples include the independent origins of adult lactose tolerance among cattle herding peoples in both Africa and the Middle East. Less obvious but nonetheless compelling examples include potentially strong selective pressures leading to changes in cognitive and personality traits as a result of sociocultural circumstances. In a sense, none of these findings should come as a great surprise, since human society and culture obviously creates the environment in which people differentially survive and reproduce, implying that the forces of natural selection have been and remain as active as ever. I hope that Cochran and Harpending's book is widely read (particularly by social scientists and the general public) and helps to refute the stubbornly held view that only culture and environment matter as the driving forces of modern human history.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. An outstanding brief look at human evolution.  
By Michael T Kennedy  
I have now read this book twice on Kindle and then ordered the hardcover version, which is easier to leaf back and forth and make notes in. It is incredibly dense and detailed with information that has been compressed and given almost in outline form. I plan to work my way through the references and do more reading. I have been struggling to read Lewin's *Gene XI* and will spend renewed effort with this book as inspiration. I was also pleased to see that it agrees pretty much with the first chapter of my own medical history book, in which I tried to summarize human evolution in brief form. My own book is called "A Brief History of Disease, Science and Medicine," <http://www..com/Brief-History-Disease-Science-Medicine/dp/0974946656>.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Interested in How Human Populations...Races...Got That Way?  
By J. Paige Straley  
Really indispensable for anyone who would think about the uncontrolled demographic changes occurring mainly within the West. If you read it carefully it removes the politically-correct blinders. Also gives you an idea of how positive traits can rapidly spread in a population (adult lactose tolerance is the example), and hints at how the oncoming juggernaut of genetic engineering will spread like lightning! He doesn't discuss CRISPR but anyone who is interested should look it up right now.  
JP Straley  
Hickory, NC

Resistance to malaria. Blue eyes. Lactose tolerance. What do all of these traits have in common? Every one of them has emerged in the last 10,000 years. Scientists have long believed that the great leap forward that occurred some 40,000 to 50,000 years ago in Europe marked end of significant biological evolution in humans. In this stunningly original account of our evolutionary history, top scholars Gregory Cochran and Henry Harpending reject this conventional wisdom and reveal that the human species has undergone a storm of genetic change much more recently. Human evolution in fact accelerated after civilization arose, they contend, and these ongoing changes have played a pivotal role in human history. They argue that biology explains the expansion of the Indo-Europeans, the European conquest of the Americas, and European Jews' rise to intellectual prominence. In each of these cases, the key was recent genetic change: adult milk tolerance in the early Indo-Europeans that allowed for a new way of life, increased disease resistance among the Europeans settling America, and new versions of neurological genes among European Jews. Ranging across subjects as diverse as human domestication, Neanderthal hybridization, and IQ tests, Cochran and Harpending's analysis demonstrates convincingly that human genetics have changed and can continue to change much more rapidly than scientists have previously believed. A provocative and fascinating new look at human evolution that turns conventional wisdom on its head, *The 10,000 Year Explosion* reveals the ongoing interplay between culture and biology in the making of the human race.

From Publishers Weekly  
Arguing that human genetic evolution is still ongoing, physicist-turned-evolutionary biologist Cochran and anthropologist Harpending marshal evidence for dramatic genetic change in the (geologically) recent past, particularly since the invention of agriculture. Unfortunately, much of their argument—including the origin of modern humans, agriculture, and Indo-Europeans—tends to neglect archaeological and geological evidence; readers should keep in mind that assumed time frames, like the age of the human species, are minimums at best and serious underestimates at worst. That said, there is much here to recommend, including the authors' unique approach to the question of modern human-Neanderthal interbreeding, and their discussion of the genetic pressures on Ashkenazi Jews over the past 1,000 years, both based solidly in fact. They also provide clear explanations for tricky concepts like gene flow and haplotypes, and their arguments are intriguing throughout. Though lapses in their case won't be obvious to the untrained eye, it's clear that this lively, informative text is not meant to deceive (abundant references and a glossary also help) but to provoke thought, debate and possibly wonder. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.  
From Booklist  
Cochran and Harpending dispute the late Stephen Jay Goulds

assertion that civilization was built with the same body and brain Homo sapiens has had for 40,000 years. Humanity has been evolving very dramatically for the last 10,000 years, they say, spurred by the very civilizational forces launched by that evolution. They initially retreat, however, to Gould's 40,000-year benchmark to consider how H. sapiens replaced H. neanderthalensis and to argue for genetic mixing such that modern humans got from Neanderthals the innovative capacity for civilization. Later, agricultural life created problems necessitating adaptations, most importantly to disease and diet, that persist to this day among inheritors of the populations that made them. Lighter skin and eye color arose from other genetic reactions to environmental challenges, and less immediately obvious changes further discriminated discrete populations, as recently as late-eighteenth-century Ashkenazi Jews, among whom intelligence burgeoned in, Cochran and Harpending contend, adaptive response to social pressure. A most intriguing deposition, without a trace of ethnic or racial advocacy, though directed against the proposition that we're all the same. --Ray Olson John Derbyshire, author of Prime Obsession "Did human evolution come to a screeching halt fifty thousand years ago when Homo sapiens emerged from Africa, thus ensuring the psychic unity of mankind? Don't be silly, say the authors of this latest addition to the fast-emerging discipline of Biohistory. In clear prose backed by a wealth of hard data, Cochran and Harpending add a biological dimension to the history of our species, and hammer another nail into the coffin lid of 'nothing but culture' anthropology." Bruce G. Charlton, MD; Professor of Theoretical Medicine, University of Buckingham, Editor in Chief of Medical Hypotheses The 10,000 Year Explosion offers scientists and historians a new and fertile direction for future research, and provides the general public with a better explanation of the past, present, and future of human beings.... I was motivated to read the entire book in a single marathon session. John Hawks, author of Human Evolution For years, human geneticists have been uncovering a picture of human evolution. But now, Gregory Cochran and Henry Harpending are encouraging us to 'fast forward' the discussion." Booklist A most intriguing deposition, without a trace of ethnic or racial advocacy, though directed against the proposition that we're all the same."