

(Download ebook) Germs, Genes, Civilization: How Epidemics Shaped Who We Are Today

# Germs, Genes, Civilization: How Epidemics Shaped Who We Are Today

*David P. Clark*

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**David P. Clark : Germs, Genes, Civilization: How Epidemics Shaped Who We Are Today** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Germs, Genes, Civilization: How Epidemics Shaped Who We Are Today:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting topicBy J. OakesThis was an interesting book. The author does a good job in describing not only the basics of disease, transmission, and genetic mutation, but also the history of various diseases and plagues that have affected mankind throughout history. I was intrigued by the author's hypothesis that diseases have played a larger role in shaping human history than warfare or economics, and while I'm not fully convinced, it's easy to see that the effects of disease have been overlooked by many historians. There are two things I didn't like about the book. First, it tended to be very repetitive. Information was put forward, almost in the same form, again and again, as though the author had not yet mentioned it. It's almost as though the eleven chapters were written separately and then compiled into a book. A good editing of the book could fix this. Second, it was quite obvious that the author disdains religion in general. In particular, the chapter on religion and disease didn't seem to fit in with the rest of the book - it just seemed to be a place to grind the ax against religion. There were many little jabs against religion scattered throughout the book, which detracts from the author's main argument. Overall, I did enjoy this book, and would recommend it to anyone interested in history or diseases in general. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. No wonder religion is in our genes...By oldcamanMany thoughtful reviews here. To me the most impressive part of the book is its very persuasive presentation of the role of religion (mostly in the past but still

very much with us) in understanding and treating infectious diseases. Not that prayers ever cured any infectious (or other) disease but it certainly looked that way for the ones who survived. Did natural selection take place favoring 'believers' over non-believers? As the author documents, the common sense of some 'religious' practices (basically improving hygiene and segregating the sick) may have been helpful regardless of their 'supernatural' origin. To be human means, among other things, is to understand WHY things (not only diseases) are happening. For most of the existence of our species correct explanations (mostly science) did not exist. So, religion in a general sense - many varieties of it - substituted in the past and for a very large number of people it still does. Not much we, a small minority of agnostics, can do about it. It is in our genes and there may not be a natural selection to increase our numbers. We may feel superior (good for us...) but we will die just like anyone else from mostly circulatory diseases or cancer. No natural selection here. The author apparently likes cats and so do I. Will it prolong our procreative lives? Certainly not. The author is not even married... 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Changed the way I view history. By Forrest Christian. I expected this book to read much like a slightly less dense biology lecture but that I might slog through a quarter of it. Instead, it's a clearly written book that easily explains the genetic/biology stuff while bringing in the Big Picture historical changes brought about by infections. The idea is pretty surprising: infections gave rise to historical changes and trends, and that without understanding them you can't understand how civilizations rise and fall. It's one of those books that change the way that you see the world. The lackings of this book -- it does need a better editor and there aren't any footnotes -- are nothing compared to the author's ability to explain what is really a wildly difficult topic in clear prose for the average reader. Footnotes in a book like this would probably have been distracting, although I would have appreciated endnotes; the editing issues are mostly repetitions that could have been smoothed over better and not irritating failures of explanation. Most experts can't write like this, can't explain these big concepts in plain language, which is why so many of these types of books are written by science journalists. Clark pulls it off extremely well. Highly recommended.