

Newsletter

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From the Director - The Ins and Outs of Creative Haplogroup Names

Sometimes you will see a message posted on a DNA mailing list that begins with: "I tested with so and so company and they say, "I am a Viking", or "I am an Artisan", or "I am an Oisin", or "I am part of Clan Ursula" and so on. But if you are new to genetic genealogy or you have not checked out several DNA company websites, you may be left scratching your head wondering what these names and labels mean.

Creative haplogroup naming systems probably began with Bryan Sykes' bestselling book, "[The Seven Daughters of Eve](#)" published in 2001. In the book, Sykes assigns female given names to mitochondrial haplogroups based on the letter that the haplogroup begins with. Thus, haplogroup U became "Ursula". This creative naming system became widely successful and if you google many of the names, you will find websites compiled about the different "clans". However, the success of these names is primarily limited to the names of the "seven daughters" (which are seven mtDNA haplogroups found in Europe). The names that he gave other lines haven't really caught on. There are two for my haplogroup which are "Nuo" and "Naomi" and while I have a good guess as to which is my branch, it would not be clear-cut to a newcomer. Other names are probably too complicated to remember or pronounce like "Djigonasee".[p 275]

Sykes deviated from the name equals corresponding haplogroup letter in his 2006 book, "[Blood of the Isles](#)" (renamed "[Saxons, Vikings, and Celts](#)" for the North American market) which covers Y-chromosome haplogroups in Britain. Instead, he assigned names based on different heritage groups found within a haplogroup. So the Western European R1b became Oisin, while Nordic R1a is Sigurd.¹ This naming system hasn't come into mainstream use like its European mitochondrial counterpart.

But what has caught on is the trend for DNA companies to label and then associate a particular haplogroup with a given historical tribe or ethnicity. This method is likely employed to help people understand or have an affinity for their deep ancestral haplogroup origins. There is a caveat to this system though and it is this; just because a company identifies you as [insert creative name here] does not mean your Y-chromosome or mitochondrial ancestors actually were in this particular tribe or group. It only means that members of the tribes or groups are presently believed to have been abundant in that haplogroup.

For example, I have a friend who is Y-haplogroup E1b (formerly E3b). This branch of E appears in Britain and has been linked broadly to the Balkans and more specifically to the Thracians.² There is some historical basis, independent of genetics, to conclude Thracians entered Britain during the Roman period as soldiers. Does this mean that my friend's ancestors were Thracians? Were all Thracians E1b? That seems unlikely. E1b can be found throughout Europe and present day theories of its dispersal during or even after the Neolithic age remain just that; theories largely reliant on mathematical computations. My friend's ancestry traces to Portugal and not Britain so, while it's possible his Y carrying ancestor was Thracian in the service of Rome, it is equally likely he was Roman, Phoenician, Carthaginian, Greek or some other group to which we today ascribe an ethnic or tribal identity.

So something to keep in mind when you receive your haplogroup results:
Try to learn as much as possible about your haplogroup before you start a sentence with "I am".

-Katherine Borges
ISOGG Director

Haplogroup Resources:
[ISOGG Y-DNA Haplogroup Tree](#)
[Y-Haplogroup Projects and Websites](#)
[mtDNA Haplogroup Projects](#)

Sources:

¹Geographic patterns of Haplogroup R1b in the British Isles
<http://www.jogg.info/31/campbell.pdf>

²Haplogroup E3b1a2 as a Possible Indicator of Settlement in Roman Britain by Soldiers of Balkan Origin
<http://www.jogg.info/32/bird.htm>



The DNA Toolkit is a new feature to share online tools which help you make the most of your DNA results.

[Mutation Rate Calculator](#) - Developed by Ann Turner in 2002 as a tool which calculates an "expected" number of mutations that can occur between descendants of a common ancestor. See Charles Kerchner's [diagram](#) for an example of counting transmission events. (NOTE: The Mutation Rate Calculator is an .exe file and your virus software may issue a warning before opening. It is ok to open though.)

Featured DNA Project



The Long Surname DNA Project

Bill Long, Administrator of the [Long DNA Project](#), was nominated as an outstanding administrator by his Co-Administrator, Barbara Long. From Barbara's nomination submission, "*Bill is readily available plus answers e-mails quickly and timely. He is faithful to include myself (as co-administrator) in any e-mails he sends to our group or emails of any discussions. He is up to date on all data and very knowledgeable, if a question arises, Bill will find the answer.*"

Bill encouraged myself to join the ISOGG and does recruiting. During the times he is gone for several days, Bill remembers to inform the co-administrator. Our site is improving consistently, and he is good to delegate duties such as regularly checking the links to our site. Most importantly, Bill has a kind and professional online personality. Our LONG DNA site is so very fortunate to have a great administrator."

What's **NEW** in ISOGG

DNA in the News

[Union of genealogy and genetics saving lives](#)

- The Salt Lake Tribune - 27 Mar 2009

[DNA reveals story of dad's disappearance](#)

- The News & Observer - 23 Mar 2009

[Mystery solved as tests prove Tsar's entire family was murdered](#)

- The Independent - 11 Mar 2009

For more articles:

<http://www.isogg.org/newsarchives.htm>

NEW ISOGG page - Personal Genome Tests

<http://www.isogg.org/pgt.htm>

The ISOGG newsletter is a membership benefit of the world's first society founded for the promotion and education of genetic genealogy, ISOGG - The International Society of Genetic Genealogy. Membership is FREE! Members automatically receive the newsletter to share the latest news and happenings in the world of genetic genealogy.

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