1994 *The History and Geography of Human Genes*

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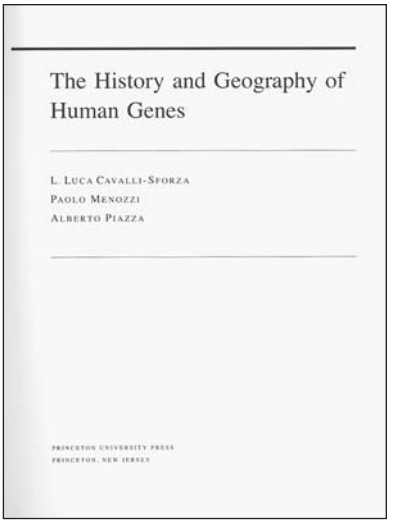

Long before scientists had mapped the human genome, three Italian researchers were at work on another project destined to change the face of scientific inquiry: the reconstruction of where human populations originated and the paths by which they spread throughout the world.

The result was *The History and Geography of Human Genes*, which became not only a landmark in the study of human evolution but a refutation of popular pseudoscientific theory. The book appeared on the shelves at nearly the same time as *The Bell Curve*, the then best-selling book that blamed genetics for the gap between the average IQs of whites and blacks. But Cavalli-Sforza's team concluded unequivocally that once the genes for surface traits such as coloration and stature are discounted, the human "races" are remarkably alike under the skin. There was "no scientific basis" for theories touting the genetic superiority of any one population over another.

The book was far more than a foil for *The Bell Curve*, however. It provided the first map of the worldwide geographic distribution of genes for more than 110 traits in more than 1,800 primarily aboriginal populations. Cavalli-Sforza and his team had become the first researchers to devise a clock by which to date evolutionary history.

The book attracted international media attention for many months in the mid-1990s. The *New York Times* credited its authors with being "able to make sense of the whisperings of human ancestors that are recorded in the genes of present-day people." *Time* magazine hailed the book as "nothing less than the first genetic atlas of the world."