

DYNASTY

Claudia Sola





If you've made up your mind to test a theory, or you want to explain some idea, you should always decide to publish it whichever way it comes out.

RICHARD FEYNMAN, *Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman!*



In 2012 I discovered that, for a small price, anyone could have their DNA charted. My curiosity got the better of me and I sent off some cheek tissue. Amongst the plethora of health data I received a few weeks later, there was something about mtDNA, short for mitochondrial DNA. What could this be? I started researching and immediately a whole new world was revealed.



Mitochondrion

Mitochondrial DNA is small, ring-shaped DNA which is not part of the nucleus but is found in mitochondria in the cellular fluid. They regulate the energy balance in the cell, the transformation of nutrients into suitable fuel and the use of oxygen in our metabolism. They have their own DNA and they split up independently from the DNA in the nucleus.

Not all cells have identical numbers of mitochondria. Male sperm cells, for example, have very few and those are in the tails. The tails fall off the moment the sperm enters the ovule. This means that the embryo is completely dependent on the hereditary qualities of the female mitochondria for the energy balance in the cells, in boys and girls alike. As the mitochondria originate for one hundred per cent from the mother, they form a trail of hereditary characteristics which go back to mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, great-great-grandmother... right back to the very first woman.

We all know about family trees: they are based on fathers and sons, generations of titles, estates and possessions. This is doubtless related to male dominance throughout the world. The use of surnames is also based on the prolongation of male inheritance. This is not really practical as new DNA material is added at every birth. Genealogical research would be infinitely more efficient if we were to examine the female, mitochondrial line which does not get mixed up with every new generation.

In everyone's mitochondrial DNA there are characteristics of 'Mitochondrial Eve', our very first mother. Once every ten thousand years a minute mutation occurs in one woman. Since that one original mother, 36 different clan mothers have been discovered to date. The clan mother is at the

head of a so-called haplogroup, of which there are also 36. These 36 haplogroups are together responsible for the world's population today.

Each haplogroup is given a letter and each clan mother has a fictitious name. My clan is haplogroup I. My clan mother is called Iris. She lived 25,000 years ago in the Middle East, probably in what we now call Iran.

Could this be the reason that I so often feel out of place in the Netherlands? That I am full of vitality on those days classified as a heat-wave and listless on those called nice and fresh?

Genes do not come to life at the moment of birth. They are conveyed by millions of individual lives over thousands of generations. They have literally been carried in the bodies of our ancestors. Is my behaviour influenced by a connection through thousands of years with my original ancestral mother?

Nowadays the haplogroup that originated from Iris can be found in Asia Minor and Europe. Research has revealed a strong correlation worldwide between haplogroups and language areas, between haplogroups and architecture, between haplogroups and mechanisms of survival, etc. Am I closer to my mitochondrial brothers and sisters than to others? If we met each other, would there be any form of recognition?

I started to collect photographs of people living in areas where haplogroup I resides. A big group lives in the Swat valley, where the Taliban is dominant. So I must have a lot of mitochondrial brothers who favour the sharia. On the other hand, I find a sister in Benazir Bhutto, the Pakistani stateswoman who was murdered in 2008. And in Golda Meir, the first female Israeli prime minister during the Yom Kippur War in 1973. And Sharbat Gula who appears in the infamous photograph by Steve McCurry.

Many siblings have emigrated or fled, such as Andy Warhol's parents, from the Ukrainian diaspora. Apparently, I am one of a very large family which, like all families, comprises good and bad characters.

To see how far my mitochondrial resemblance stretches, I dressed the part and had several photographs taken in a photo booth.







Western Isles
of Skye



Oakeney



Danes



Roman



demkos



Welsh



Frisiëre



Périgord
Limousin



Bizkaia
de Euzko
Navarre
(west)



Vare



Tuscany



Kelt
Drac
Korčula
Hvar



Greek



Anatolia



Surage



Turkana



El Molo

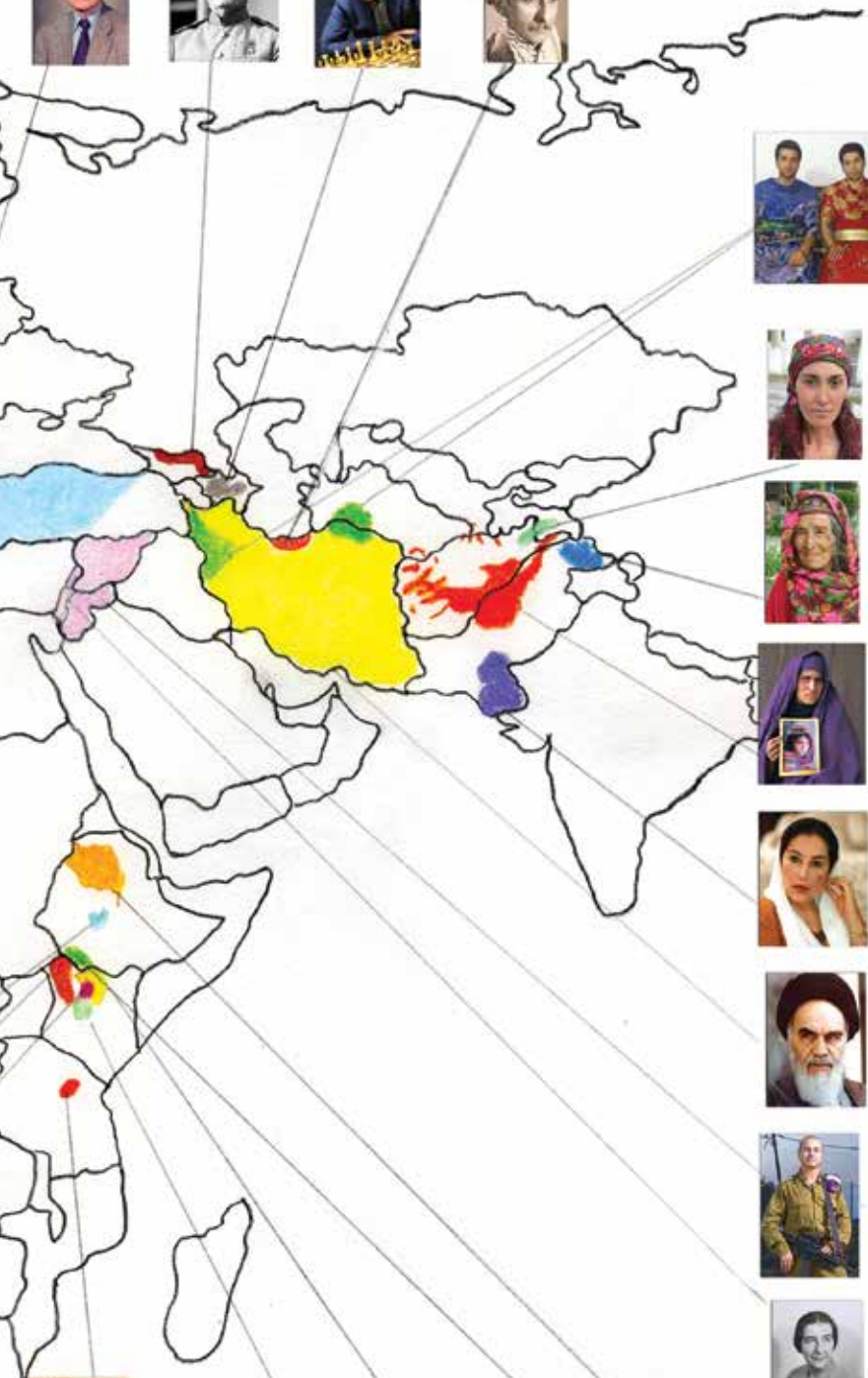


Polish

Caucasian

Azeri

Nazandarian



Kurdish



Shugnan



Uzun Baruchor



Pashtun



Sindhi



Persian



Druze



Israeli



Burunge



Samburu



Rendille



Nyangatom



Amhara





This publication appears on the occasion of the exhibition:

'FRIEND AND FOE, THE SENSATION OF COMBINING'

Hans Aartsman together with Peter Hermanides, Jos Houweling, Frank Schallmaier, Claudia Sola & Useful Photography.

20.10.2013 – 29.11.2013

Claudia Sola (1974, NL) has a craving to make personal issues sensible in the 'greater world'. Whilst doing research into her personal history and analysing her genealogy, Sola has created a new installation in West's back room. In this installation, Sola shows the power of the matriarchal line and the common grounds between friend and foe. The world is very small, but core stories have their own contemporary manifestation. Sola has previously exhibited in Photo museum Antwerp; Museo Arts Santa Monica, Barcelona; NYPE, New York; Rencontres d'Arles; Jerwood Space, London and the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.



Landscape photo: Swat Valley, Pakistan

Map: Claudia Sola

Photos Claudia Sola as:

Maria Callas

Sharbat Gula

Benazir Bhutto

Sofje Gråbrøl

Golda Meir

Ayatollah Khomeini

Andy Warhol

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