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The berber and the Berber: genetic and linguistic diversity (CRP 01-JA07)

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Abstract:

North Africa occupied a critical position in the initial dispersal and evolution of human populations. Archeological evidence suggests that this region has also had a decisive importance for population movements between Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Europe since Paleolithic times. The Berber, one of the predominant cultures of the area, provides evidence that different processes have influenced cultural differentiation (as indicated by language affiliation) and biological affinity (as evidenced by genetic relationships). The genetic differentiation between the northern and southern Berbers, in contrast to their linguistic affinities, makes these populations particularly interesting to the study of the different processes determining the present biological picture of human populations. In this context, we are investigating the extent of genetic and linguistic diversity in the Berber populations to get some light on the biological-cultural interactions that can explain the current diversity. The genetic markers at our disposal are the GM immunoglobulin allotypes, DNA polymorphisms having variable mutation rates (and their proper value for the peopling genetic history) : SNPs, microsatellites, sequences, Alu polymorphisms, on mtDNA, Y chromosome and autosomes. Thus evolution will be measured with several scales of time. Our objectives are to study the genetic diversity of the Berbers, in relation to the various languages.