

Haplogroup J (Y-STR)

Haplogroup J originated in southwestern Asia between 25,000 and 30,000 years ago. The lineage is closely related to haplogroup I, with which it shares seven mutations. Haplogroup J is most common in the Middle East, North Africa, and Ethiopia, although its representatives are also scattered along the European coasts of the Mediterranean. Almost all members of haplogroup J belong to one of its main subgroups, J1 and J2.

Subgroup J1 is associated with the expansion of Semitic tribes in northern Africa, where the lineage is common among Semitic-speaking people today. In Ethiopia, for example, 33% of the Semitic-speaking Amhara people belong to haplogroup J1, while their non-Semitic-speaking neighbors, the Oromo, carry the lineage at a frequency of less than 3%. J1 is also ubiquitous in Yemen, Oman, and Saudi Arabia, as well as among the Bedouins of the Negev Desert. Elsewhere in the Middle East, subgroup J1 has been identified at lower frequencies among various Jewish groups, Syrians, Lebanese, and Palestinian Arabs.

The spread of haplogroup J2 has been linked to the spread of agriculture out of the Levant and Anatolia (Turkey). The group is estimated to be around 20,000 years old, and its distribution in southern Europe and western Asia is associated with Neolithic archaeological sites, where painted pottery and small figurines have been unearthed.

The two main branches of J2, in turn, are J2a and J2b, both of which are distributed from southern Europe all the way to South Asia. J2a is common in Lebanon, Iran, Georgia, southern Pakistan, southern Italy, Crete, Turkey, and especially around the Sea of Marmara, which connects the Black and Aegean Seas. Both archaeological evidence and genetic research support the hypothesis that bearers of J2a were among the first to bring farming to Eurasia and North Africa. In India, J2a is largely confined to upper-caste Dravidian and Indo-European speakers. A further subdivision of J2a, J2a1b, corresponds temporally and geographically to Bronze Age cultures and early farmers.

Another main branch of J2, J2b, saw demographic expansion in India approximately 14,000 years ago. The group is almost entirely absent among Indian tribal groups, however, except those speaking Austro-Asiatic languages.

