ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Artificial Cranial Deformation in the South Caucasus: An Anthropological Review

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Abstract

This study presents an anthropological investigation of artificial cranial deformation (ACD) practices across the South Caucasus, focusing on present-day Georgia and Armenia. We analyzed 90 individuals with ACD from Georgia, dating from the Early Antique to the Early Middle Ages, alongside 38 individuals from Armenia, dating from the Late Bronze Age through the Early Middle Ages. Age and sex distributions were determined using standard osteological methods, while deformation types (annular, tabular, and circular) were classified based on cranial morphology. The geographical context reveals distinct regional practices in ACD, with notable variations in deformation type and prevalence across the provinces studied. We generated genome-wide ancient DNA data to analyze biological relatedness and population genetic makeup, providing deeper insight into the transmission and spread of this cultural practice. Our findings contribute to understanding the social and cultural dynamics of cranial modification traditions in the South Caucasus, highlighting both regional diversity and temporal continuity. This research enriches knowledge of population-specific practices and the complex interactions shaping identity and tradition across the South Caucasus.

Keywords

ACD, South Caucasia, aDNA, Cultural Practices, Population Genetics

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