

Publication

Ancient human genome-wide data from a 3000-year interval in the Caucasus corresponds with eco-geographic regions

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Archaeogenetic studies have described the formation of Eurasian 'steppe ancestry' as a mixture of Eastern and Caucasus hunter-gatherers. However, it remains unclear when and where this ancestry arose and whether it was related to a horizon of cultural innovations in the 4th millennium BCE that subsequently facilitated the advance of pastoral societies in Eurasia. Here we generated genome-wide SNP data from 45 prehistoric individuals along a 3000-year temporal transect in the North Caucasus. We observe a genetic separation between the groups of the Caucasus and those of the adjacent steppe. The northern Caucasus groups are genetically similar to contemporaneous populations south of it, suggesting human movement across the mountain range during the Bronze Age. The steppe groups from Yamnaya and subsequent pastoralist cultures show evidence for previously undetected farmer-related ancestry from different contact zones, while Steppe Maykop individuals harbour additional Upper Palaeolithic Siberian and Native American related ancestry.

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