

Original Research Article

A MORPHOMETRIC STUDY ON WORMIAN BONES IN SOUTHERN ODISHA POPULATION

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ABSTRACT

Background: Wormian bones or sutural bones, are small, irregularly shaped bones most commonly found in the lambdoid suture of skull, but they may also appear in other cranial sutures. These bones develop due to multiple ossification centers within the sutures of skull during development. The knowledge of Wormian bones plays a major role for the neurosurgeons, neuro-anatomists, radiologists, forensic experts and anthropologists. Presence of few wormian bones is normal. But multiple Wormian bones need attention as it may have underlying skeletal or central nervous system pathology. **Objective:** To determine morphologic and morphometric characteristics of wormian bones in Southern Odisha population.

Materials and Methods: The study was conducted on 53 dry human skulls of unknown gender and age in the Department of Anatomy, MKCG MCH, Berhampur, Odisha. The deformed skulls and skulls of paediatric age group were excluded. The location, shape, number and side of wormian bones were determined.

Results: In the present study; wormian bones were observed in 38 (71.7%) skulls out of 53 skulls, and the total number of the observed wormian bones were 129. More than five wormian bones were found in 8 skulls (28%), four in two skulls (5.2%), three in 9 skulls (23.6%), two in 10 skulls (26.3%) and one in nine skulls (23.6%). The wormian bones were seen uniformly distributed both on right and left sides, at a rate of 44.2 %. Maximum number of bones were seen at lambdoid suture (n=78, 60.4 %); followed by lambda 11.6%, pterion 10.8 %, asterion 8.5%, parieto-mastoid suture 6.2 %, squamous suture 2.3% and occipito-mastoid suture 2.3%. The mean values of wormian bones were 15.27 ± 5.99 mm vertical diameter and 18.13 ± 7.9 mm horizontal diameter. The mean cranial breadth and cranial length were found as 134.53 ± 6.38 mm and 164.81 ± 7.12 mm respectively. In terms of cephalic index values, 11.3 % were dolicocephalic, 28.3 % mesocephalic, 39.6% brachycephalic and 20.7 % were hyperbrachycephalic skulls. The most common types of skulls in the wormian bone presence group were brachycephalic.

Conclusion: Greater cephalic index, higher incidence of wormian bones, large size wormian bones in our study may indicate the influence of genetic and environmental factors over development of skull bones in Southern Odisha population.

Keywords: wormian bone, suture, interparietal bone, pterion, asterion, lambda

INTRODUCTION

Wormian bones (ossasuturalia), first described by Danish anatomist Olaus Wormius, are accessory, small, different-shaped bones located on cranial

sutures (Creminet al., 1982).^[1] They arise from additional centres of ossification and have no clinical significance. These bones may have genetic cause and their initial formation is thought to be caused by degree of dural strain and increased sutural width.

Wormian bones are considered as markers for various congenital diseases like osteogenesis imperfecta and cleidocranial dysostosis.^[2]

The "Inca bone," known as the inter-parietal bone or os incae, is a sutural bone seen at lambda, where the parietal bones meet the occipital bone. It is a variation of the occipital bone, where a portion of the supraoccipital bone fails to fuse with the rest of the occipital bone, resulting in a separate piece of bone. A study done by El-Najjar and Dawson, (1977)³ focussing on the association between artificial deformation and incidence of wormian bones claimed that the incidence of wormian bones was higher in adults than in fetuses.

Sanchez-Lara et al. (2007),^[4] focused on morphogenesis of wormian bones and found higher association of wormian bones with craniosynostosis. This study reinforced the concept that mechanical forces affect wormian bone presence at high prevalence in midline with sagittal or metopic synostosis.

The incidence of wormian bones varies significantly among different populations and ethnic groups. Various studies conclude that they are more commonly observed in populations of South Asia, and parts of Africa. Whereas, lower frequencies have been reported in Central and Western Asia, and Europe. However the occurrence of wormian bones is highest along the lambdoid suture in all types of populations.

According to various anatomical studies, the prevalence of wormian bones in the general population ranges from 10% to 40%, depending on genetic and environmental influences. Some studies report that males tend to exhibit a higher incidence than females, but the difference is statistically

insignificant. It may be opined that genetic factors are responsible for occurrence of wormian bones individually in different human populations.

The detailed information of precise topography, frequency, and number of wormian bones is of utmost use for

1. Surgeons performing surgery on the skull,
2. Anthropologists for identifying races, and
3. Forensic scientists for investigating child abuse cases

Aim and Objectives

1. To expound the incidence and topography of wormian bones in dry adult skulls in Southern Odisha population.
2. To measure the size, shape, location and number of wormian bones and compare the values with available data established by other authors.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- The study was conducted in the Department of Anatomy, MKCG Medical College and Hospital, on 53 complete adult dry skulls of unknown age and sex.
- Unbroken, clean and dry skulls of adult age group were selected for this study whereas deformed skulls and skulls without well visible sutures were excluded from the study.
- The length and breadth of skulls were measured using craniometry. Cephalic index of all skulls was determined using the formula (maximum cranial breadth/ maximum length) × 100. The skulls were classified into four groups based on cephalic index as illustrated in Table I.

Table 1: Cephalic Index classification

Shape	Dolichocephalic	Mesocephalic	Brachycephalic	Hyper-brachycephalic
Cephalic index	CI < 74.9	75 < CI < 79.9	80 < CI < 84.9	85 < CI < 89.9

- All the sutures in the skull were inspected for the presence of wormian bones. Distribution of the sutural bones in various types of skulls was determined. The transverse and longitudinal diameters of wormian bones were measured using thread and scale and the data was compared with the available literature.
- The descriptive statistical method analysis was used for data analysis.

RESULTS

In this study, wormian bones were observed in 38 (71.7%) skulls out of 53 skulls. More than five

Wormian bones were found in 8 skulls (28%), four in two skulls (5.2%), three in 9 skulls (23.6%), two in 10 skulls (26.3%) and one in nine skulls (23.6%). The largest number of wormian bones in a single skull was 11.

When we analyse the craniometry, the mean cranial breadth and cranial length were found as 134.53 ± 6.38 mm and 164.81 ± 7.12 mm respectively. When we analyzed the skulls in terms of cephalic index values, 11.3 % were dolichocephalic, 28.3 % were mesocephalic, 39.6% were brachycephalic and 20.7 % were hyperbrachycephalic skulls in our study. The most common types of skulls in the wormian bone presence group were brachycephalic as well as in the group that did not have wormian bone, (Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of Wormian bones in association to cranial index. N=53

Type of cranium: no, (%)	Absent of wormian bones: no, % (15, 28.3 %)	Present of wormian bones: no, % (38, 71.7 %)
Dolichocephalic, 6 (11.3 %)	3 (5.6%)	3 (5.6%)
Mesocephalic, 15 (28.3 %)	4 (7.5%)	11 (20.7%)
Brachycephalic, 21 (39.6 %)	5 (9.4%)	16 (30.2%)
Hyperbrachycephalic, 11 (20.7 %)	3 (5.6%)	8 (15.1%)

The distribution of locations of wormian bones associated with cranial index are tabulated in Table III. Lambdoid suture is the most frequent site for occurrence of wormian bones in all types of skulls. The second frequent site is the asterion for

dolichocephalic type, pterion for brachycephalic type, lambda for hyperbrachycephalic type; for mesocephalic type the wormian bones are equally distributed in occipitomastoid suture and asterion.

Table 3: Distribution of wormian bones (n=129) according to location and cranial index values

Type of cranium	Lambdoid suture	Occipito-mastoid suture	Asterion	Lambda	Pterion	Parieto-mastoid suture	Squamous suture
Dolichocephalic %	18.75	3.12	6.25	3.12	0	1.5	0.75
Mesocephalic %	9.37	3.12	3.12	0	1.5	0	0
Brachycephalic %	18.75	0	0	0	8.55	3.8	1.5
Hyperbrachycephalic %	15.62	0	12.5	6.25	3.8	0.75	0

The total number of the observed wormian bones were 129 and the greatest number of wormian bones were seen at lambdoid suture (n=78, 60.4 %). Wormian bones were observed at lambdoid suture 60.4%, lambda 11.6%, pterion 10.8 %, asterion 8.5%, parieto-mastoid suture 6.2 %, squamous suture 2.3%

and occipito-mastoid suture 2.3%. However, they were not seen at bregma, sagittal and coronal sutures. Wormian bones were seen uniformly distributed both on right and left sides, at a rate of 44.2 %. The distribution of wormian bones at different locations is illustrated in table IV.

Table 4: Location of the Wormian bones (n=129)

Location of the wormian bones	Right (n= 57, 44.2%)	Left n= 57, 44.2%)	Total (n=129)
Lambdoid suture	40 (31 %)	38 (29.2%)	78 (60.4 %)
Pterion	7 (5.4%)	7 (5.4%)	14 (10.8 %)
Asterion	4 (3.1%)	7 (5.4%)	11 (8.5 %)
Parietomastoid suture	2 (1.5%)	3 (2.3 %)	8 (6.2 %)
Occipitomastoid suture	3 (2.3%)	0 (0%)	3 (2.3 %)
Squamous suture	1 (0.7%)	2 (1.5%)	3 (2.3 %)
Lambda	15 (11.6%)		15 (11.6%)
Bregma	0 (0%)		0 (0%)
Coronal suture	0 (0%)		0 (0%)
Sagittal suture	0 (0%)		0 (0%)

Representative diagrams for locations of the wormian bones are shown in Figures 1-7.

**Figure 1: Wormian bone at asterion****Figure 2: Multiple wormian bones at lambda and lambdoid suture**



Figure 3: wormian bone at parieto-mastoid suture



Figure 4: wormian bone at pterion



Figure 5: wormian bone at squamous suture



Figure 6: wormian bone at occipitomastoid suture



Fig 7: large interparietal bone

The mean values of wormian bones were as follows; vertical diameter 15.27 ± 5.99 mm and horizontal diameter 18.13 ± 7.9 mm. The largest wormian bone measures 105.35 mm \times 55.7 mm at lambda and the smallest measures 2 mm \times 4.1 mm.

The vertical diameter was measured as 14.27 ± 5.99 mm and horizontal diameter as 23.13 ± 13.9 mm on right lambdoid suture, while the mean vertical diameter and horizontal diameter on left lambdoid suture were found as 16.12 ± 9.73 mm and 9.38 ± 1.04 mm respectively. The mean vertical diameter at pterion was found as 18.79 ± 8.82 mm and horizontal diameter was found as 18.79 ± 8.82 mm on right side; for left side the vertical diameter 8 ± 2.5 mm, horizontal diameter was 22 ± 14.12 mm. At asterion, on right side the vertical diameter was measured as 16.2 mm and horizontal diameter as 16.8 mm; on left side the vertical diameter was measured as 22.4 mm and horizontal diameter as 10.2 mm. At parieto-mastoid suture on right side the vertical and horizontal diameters were 14.5 mm and 8 mm; whereas on left side these diameters were 11.8 mm and 6 mm. For occipito-mastoid suture, the mean vertical diameter was found as 7 ± 2.16 mm and horizontal diameter was found as 5.6 ± 1.34 mm only on right side, whereas it is absent on left side. Finally, the mean values of right vertical diameter were 13.57 ± 5.72 mm and horizontal diameter were 9.46 ± 7.36 mm whereas the mean values of left vertical diameter were 14.23 ± 9 mm and horizontal diameter were 9.30 ± 8.09 mm. The mean values of vertical and horizontal diameter at lambda measured as 26.86 ± 12.12 mm. and 23.13 ± 13.34 mm respectively.

DISCUSSION

Variations in shape, number, location and incidence of wormian bones have been reported by many researchers around the world; Observations by such workers are illustrated in table V.

In the present study; wormian bones were observed in 38 (71.7%) skulls out of 53 skulls. This finding is almost corroborative with Murlimanju et.al.^[5] and Natsis et.al.^[6] However most of authors found less than 70% incidence of these bones; (Marty et.al.^[7], Patel et.al.^[8] Cirpanet et.al.^[9] Durge et.al.^[10]

Sreekanth et.al,^[11] Kumar et.al,^[12] Showri et.al,^[13] Ghosh et.al,^[14] Sah et.al,^[15] Uchewa et.al,^[16] Goyal et.al,^[17] Padmaja et.al,^[18] Kilic et.al,^[19] Somani et.al,^[20]; whereas a high incidence (88.5%) was reported in Nepalese population by Basnet et.al.^[21] More than five wormian bones were found in 8 skulls (28%), four in two skulls (5.2%), three in 9 skulls (23.6%), two in 10 skulls (26.3%) and one in nine skulls (23.6%). The maximum number of wormian bones was 11 in a single skull. Himabindu et al,^[22] found 27 wormian bones in a single skull. Cirpanet et.al.^[9] observed more than 5 only in 0.7 % skulls; maximum skulls (20%) were with a single wormian bone. Ghosh et.al,^[14] reported more than 10 wormian bones in 2.5%skulls. But Kilic et.al,^[19] found more than five wormian bones only in one out of 12 skulls. In our study, wormian bones were seen uniformly distributed both on right and left sides, at a rate of 44.2 %; corroborative with study of Murlimanju et.al.^[5] Whereas Tallapaneni et.al,^[23] Sreekanth et.al,^[11] Showri et.al,^[13] and Kilic et.al,^[19] observed more number of wormian bones on left sides. Maximum number of bones were seen at lambdoid suture; unanimously reported by all authors.

Lambda is the second frequent site for wormian bones in our study. Similar findings observed by Cirpanet et.al,^[9] Sreekanth et.al,^[11] Kumar et.al,^[12] Ghosh et.al,^[14] and Jyothi et.al.^[24] However according to Uchewa et.al,^[16] and Li et.al,^[25] pterion is the second highest site for wormian bones. In our study only 10.8% skulls had wormian bones at pterion. Asterion is reported as the second highest frequent site for wormian bones as reported by Murlimanju et.al,^[5] Patel et.al,^[8] Kumar et al,^[12] Showri et al,^[13] Sah et.al,^[15] and Kilic et.al.^[19] We also found wormian bones at parietomastoid and occipitomastoid sutures.

The wormian bones were absent at sagittal and coronal sutures. However wormian bones were reported at these sites by Murlimanju et.al,^[5] Patel et.al,^[8] Sreekanth et.al,^[11] Sah et.al,^[15] Basnet et.al,^[21] Padmaja et.al,^[18] Natsis et.al,^[6] Somani et.al,^[20] Jyothiet.al,^[24] and Li et.al.^[25] A large number of wormian bones were observed at coronal suture in greek population by Natsis et. Al,^[6] and at sagittal suture by Somani et al.^[20]

Table 5: Comparison of prevalence of wormian bones at different sites by different authors

Authors	Total	Coronal Suture	Sagittal suture	Lambdoid suture	Bregma	Lambda	Occipitomastoid suture	Parietomastoids suture	Asterion	Pterion
Murlimanju ⁵ , 2011	73.1	1.3	1.3	56.4	--	--	--	--	17.9	11.5
Patel ⁸ , 2015	44.4	0.03	--	48.14	--	--	0.03	0.07	18.5	0.03
Cirpan ⁹ , 2015	59.3	--	--	40.7	--	--	1.3	--	--	--
Sreekanth ¹¹ , 2016	59/1	--	0.9	53.15	0.9	8.1	0.9	4.5	2.7	1.8
Kumar ¹² , 2016	11	--	--	44	--	6	6	--	6	2
Showri ¹³ , 2016	--	0	0	57.14	0	9.37	9.37	0	18.76	9.37
Ghosh, 2017	42.8	--	--	53.33	0.61	21.21	--	--	--	--
Sah ¹⁵ , 2017	6	--	3.63	63.63	--	--	--	--	20	12.72
Basnet ²¹ , 2018	45	4.28	7.14	61.43	--	11.43	27.14	41.43	24.29	25.71
Uchewa ¹⁶ , 2018	55/8	--	--	36.36	--	--	--	--	--	9.09
Natsis ⁶ , 2019	0	--	--	23.8M,1	--	--	--	--	--	--
Kilic ¹⁹ , 2020	88.5	10.6	--	1.5 F	--	--	--	--	--	--
Somani ²⁰ , 2021	45.4	39.8	--	61.2	--	--	--	15.1	21	--
Jyothi ²⁵ , 2022	6	0	0	44.6	0	9.37	9.37	0	18.76 -	0
Li ²⁵ , 2023	35.3	1.06	10.77	57.14	--	--	--	--	--	--
Present study	19	--	0.7	21.28	--	5.4	--	--	--	--
	74.7	--	4.95	12.5	--	8.24	--	--	12.09	34.62
	42	0	0	78.57	0	11.6	2.3	6.2	8.5	10.8
	56/1			60.4						
	88									
	13.2									
	63.8									
	6									
	71.7									

In our study the mean size of wormian bones was measured as 15.27± 5.99mm vertical diameter and as 18.13 ± 7.9 mm horizontal diameter; which is larger in comparison to findings of Showriet.al,^[13] (12.29 ± 4.48mm × 10.93 ± 4.39 mm) and Kilic et.al,^[19] (12.29 ± 4.48 mm × 10.93 ± 4.39 mm)

When we analyse the craniometry, the mean cranial breadth and cranial length were found as 134.53 ± 6.38 mm and 164.81± 7.12 mm respectively; which

is greater than the findings by Kilic et.al (128.06 11.92 mm and 166.12 5.47mm respectively)

In our study, the most common types of skulls in the wormian bone presence group were brachycephalic as well as in the group that did not have wormian bone; corroborative with findings of Gümüşburun et.al.^[26] Whereas Showri et. Al,^[13] Basnet et.al,^[21] and Kilic et.al,^[19] found most of the skulls in dolicocephalic group with and without wormian bones. This indicates presence of larger cephalic

index in the present study; though the literature for this work is limited.

CONCLUSION

Although there were many variations on prevalence rate, location, number size and shape of wormian bones in different races; our study results were similar with the data in other population with regards to the location of highest number of wormian bones at lambdoidsuture. We found higher incidence of wormian bones at pterion and lamda in comparison to other workers. In our study; majority of the skulls belong to Brachycephalic type. Greater cephalic index, higher incidence of wormian bones, large size wormian bones may indicate the influence of genetic and environmental factors over development of skull bones in southern Odisha.

In conclusion, it is considered that the results of this study are crucial for anthropologists, anatomists, radiologists, forensic experts, and make a contribution to literature data. Presence of few bones are normal. But multiple wormian bones need attention as it may have underlying skeletal or CNS pathology. Due to the fact that wormian bones may give rise to mistakes in determining fractures, these data will also be helpful for diagnosis and treatment of skull pathologies for clinicians and neurosurgeons as wormian bone at pterion may produce complications in neurosurgical procedures like burr holes.

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