

## SHORT NOTES

*Note Brevi / Communications Brèves / Kurze Mitteilungen*

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### EARLOBE ATTACHMENT, HAND CLASPING AND ARM FOLDING AMONG TAMIL BRAHMANS IN RELATION TO CULTURAL AND ETHNIC AFFILIATIONS

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*The traits, earlobe attachment, hand clasping and arm folding, are found to show a high degree of homogeneity in the Tamil Brahmans.*

*The latter appear to be closest to the Bengali Brahmans, with respect to all three traits, and differ significantly from other Brahman populations, with respect to earlobe.*

The Brahman populations of the Tamil Nadu State of India are grouped into two religious sects: Ayyar (Smartha) and Ayyangar (Vaisnava). But one population of each sect is called by a name which suggests its northern origin, and one is referred to as southern in origin. We have attempted to assess the relative influences of cultural traditions within the sects and regional affiliations across the sects on the distribution of controversial genetical traits, such as earlobe attachment, hand clasping and arm folding (N. Freire-Maia et al. 1958, Lai and Walsh 1965, A. Freire-Maia and J. De Almeida 1966).

Data from 500 unrelated males of the four populations indicate a high degree of homogeneity among the Tamil Brahmans. However,  $\chi^2$  values for earlobe and hand clasping show closer agreement between populations with

common regional (ethnic) affiliation than between those with common cultural traditions. But for arm folding, sect-affiliation rather than place of origin displays closer statistical similarity. Summing up the  $\chi^2$  values for the three traits, the closest similarity is observed between two southern populations, and the widest divergence between the southern Ayyars and the northern Ayyangars.

The total sample of Tamil Brahmans has been compared to other Indian populations to verify the ethno-geographical and social hierarchical trends (Mohanraju and Mukherjee 1973). It shows the closest resemblance with Bengali Brahmans in the incidence of all three traits. But it differs significantly from most of the other Brahman populations in the frequency of attached earlobe, and from Brahmans of Orissa in respect of armfolding.

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Table. Earlobe Attachment, Hand Clasping and Arm Folding in Four Endogamous Groups of Tamil Brahmans

## A. Percent Frequencies

Sect	Population	N	Earlobe attached	Hand clasping (R type)	Arm folding (R type)
a. Ayyar	1. Vadama	200	31.00	58.00	34.50
	2. Brahacharnam	100	26.00	61.00	35.00
b. Ayyangar	1. Vadagalai	150	32.00	54.66	29.34
	2. Thengalai	50	26.00	62.00	28.00
Total		500	29.80	58.00	32.40

B. Intergroup Differences ( $\chi^2$  values)

Comparison	DF	Earlobe attachment	Hand clasping	Arm folding	Sum of values	DF
Within sects:						
1a $\times$ 2a	1	0.81	0.25	0.01	1.07	3
1b $\times$ 2b	1	0.65	0.83	0.04	1.52	3
Within regional affiliations:						
1a $\times$ 1b	1	0.02	0.38	1.05	1.45	3
2a $\times$ 2b	1	0.01	0.03	0.75	0.79	3
Criss-cross:						
1a $\times$ 2b	1	0.49	0.27	0.77	1.53	3
2a $\times$ 1b	1	1.04	1.00	0.89	2.93	3
Total	6	3.02	2.76	3.51	9.29	18

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