

Colour Blindness Among the Maring Nagas of Manipur

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ABSTRACT Data on the sex-linked colour vision deficiency are presented for 202 Maring males of Manipur, and the results of the region show a total number of defective colour vision persons of 1.98%.

INTRODUCTION

The Marings form an important tribal group of Manipur inhabiting within the Tengnoupal subdivision of the Chandel District of the State, whose 'features appropriate to those of the Burmese' (Hodson, 1984 : 6) and 'is considered to be a separate race' differing in origin from either the Nagas or the Kukis' (Brown 1874 : 16). The tribe is regarded as an 'independent' origin in contrast to the Naga or the Kuki group of tribes of the state 'because they are a product of different types of historical relationships and upheavals resulting in a distinct form of social organisational pattern' (Das, 1988 : 27). Though 'they are distinguished from both Kukis and others by wearing their hair long and confined in a bunch like a horn arising from the front of the head' (Dun, 1886 : 31) 'they are generally classed as Nagas' (Dun, 1886 : 31). Hodson (1984 : 2) also categorised them within the Naga group, and now-a-days they also align themselves with this group. The Maring dialect, that is included within the Naga-Kuki subgroup (of the Naga group) of the Tibeto-Burman family (Grierson 1923, c.f. Hodson, 1984 : 2), and 'very obviously belong to so distinct a group of dialects, that even less difficulty can be raised in accepting the popular use of linguistic differences as a test of tribal distinction (Hodson, 1984 : 2).

The Maring followed tribe endogamy and clan exogamy strictly, but in recent years a few cases of intertribal marriages have been noticed. Although the rules of endogamy and monogamy may be relaxed in some cases, there can not, however, be any compromise in respect of clan exo-

gamy. Having sheltered on the forestclad hill-top or at the mid-hill range, most of the Maring villages are accessible by walking. They are primarily shifting cultivators, but now-a-days, some Maring villages are also giving way to a more or less sedentary type of cultivation (*chinglou*) and wet cultivation at the foothills.

The present paper reports the incidence of colour blindness among the Maring Naga tribe of Manipur.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The material analysed consists of 202 unrelated Maring males drawn from seven Maring villages, namely Marimchi, Kangoi Khullen, Kangoi Khunou, Karongthel, Paringtong, Lamlong Khullen and Lamlong Khunou of the Chandel district of Manipur. None of the unrelated 82 Maring females show defective colour vision. The tests for colour blindness were conducted by using the Ishihara (1960) plates.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of the 202 Maring males tested, only 4 (1.98%) were found to be colour blind (Table 1). The deutan type shows a higher frequency (1.48%) than protan type (0.49%), and the proportion of red blind : green blind Maring males is thus 1 : 3.

Table 1 : Incidence of red-green colour blindness among the Maring Nagas of Manipur

Sex	No. tested	Defective colour vision					
		Protan (P)		Deutan (D)		P + D	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	202	1	0.49	3	1.48	4	1.98
Female	82	—	—	—	—	—	—

The marked variations seen in the frequency of the defective colour vision of the Maring

(1.98%) with that of other populations reported from Manipur viz., Meitei - 8.57% (Singh, 1978); Kabui - 4.96% (Chakravarti, 1986); Phayeng-4.54% (ManiBabu et al., 1991), Tangkhul 2.5% (Chakravarti, 1986), etc. all of which have original and racial propinquity with the Maring -partly agrees with the earlier presupposition of the doubts about the ethnic bearing of this sex-linked trait (Boyd, 1950; Post, 1962). Such variations could, however, 'be better explained by consideration of the habitat and cultural stages of the people concerned than their racial variation' (Mukherjee, 1963) and closeness.

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