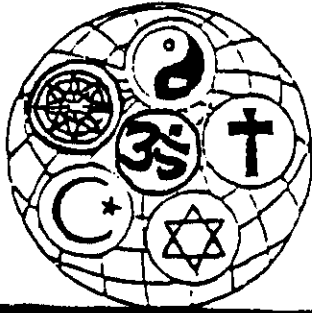


# Geography of Religions & Belief Systems



Editor: Carolyn V. Prorok  
Department of Geography & Environmental  
Studies, Slippery Rock University  
Slippery Rock, PA 16057

Volume 12 No. 2 Fall 1990

## EDITOR'S NOTE

The mailing list for the GORABS working group continues to expand with the names of new members. I would especially like to thank Barbara Weightman and Susan Hardwick, both of CSU-Chico, for combing past AAG Conference Programs (1986-1990) for potential new members of our group. If you know of anyone that would like to receive the newsletter, but is not already on our mailing list, please forward his/her name and address to me.

If you have an essay that you would like to submit for publication in the newsletter, do not hesitate to send it to me. We need your contributions. For this issue Bob Stoddard of UN-Lincoln has provided our feature essay. Entitled, "Some Comments About the History of GORABS," Bob relates some background notes on the development of our working group. It is obvious that the group has had its ups and downs. I believe that we are on the upswing again, so to speak, and with the concerted effort of group members, we will create a speciality group in the AAG next year. Come to the Miami meetings. Look for our special sessions organized by Surinder Bhardwaj and sign the petition for speciality group status. Once our group is formally recognized, make sure you select it for membership the next time you pay your dues!

## GORABS FEATURE

### SOME COMMENTS ABOUT THE HISTORY OF "THE GEOGRAPHY OF RELIGION AND BELIEF SYSTEMS" by Robert H. Stoddard

The study of religion has attracted the attention of small groups of scholars for a long time, so it is impossible to specify a specific date after which a permanent organization dedicated to the geography of religion has existed. For example, one of the publicized attempts to establish an on-going group in recent decades was the notice placed in the Professional Geographer in the spring of 1965 by Reed F. Stewart. As a result, more than two dozen geographers assembled during the 1965 AAG to discuss common interests in the geography of religion. However, since no formal organization survived into the next decade, that meeting can hardly be regarded as the origin of the current organization.



In contrast, the formal organization and accompanying newsletter that originated in 1976 can probably be considered as the roots which evolved into the current group focusing on the geography of religion. On the basis of plans initiated during an informal discussion at the 1975 AAG meeting in Milwaukee, an organization was established at the 1976 AAG meeting in New York City. It was called the International Working Group of the Geography of Belief Systems and was structured according to guidelines set by the IGU. The steering committee consisted of a chair; Manfred Buttner from Germany (formerly West Germany), a secretary; Klaus D. Gurgel (a graduate student at Syracuse University), and members; Elaine Bjorklund from Canada, Zygmunt Poniatowski from Poland, and Kurt Rudolph from Germany (West). Among the projects the group undertook were the sponsorship of papers presented at annual meetings of the AAG, the distribution of a newsletter twice a year, the compilation of an International bibliography, and the publication of a book on contemporary research on the geography of belief systems.

Along with the 1976 organizational meeting, a series of papers were presented by Edwin S. Gaustad, Bharat L. Bhatt, and Jack A. Licate, as well as members of the steering committee. At the 1977 AAG meeting in Salt Lake City, papers were delivered by Manfred Buttner, Michael Vermilyea, L. Mayland Parker, Karl Hohelsel, Robert H. Stoddard, Jane Ratcliffe, and Charles A. Heatwole. For the next several years, one or more sessions were organized by this group, sometimes in cooperation with papers initiated by those interested in the geography of the Bible.

The first issue (Vol. 1, No. 1) of the newsletter, "Geography of Religion/Belief Systems," appeared in January 1977 and was edited by Jane E. Ratcliffe of DePaul University and Charles A. Heatwole of Hunter College-CUNY. The same two persons continued to edit the newsletter each January and July until July of 1979 (Vol. 3, No. 2). No newsletters appeared in 1980. It reappeared at the beginning of 1981 (Vol. 4, No. 1) as the "Geography of Religion and Belief Systems," and for the first time it carried the logo that is still being used. From 1981 through 1985 (Volumes 4-7) were edited by differing combinations of Gregory P. Stein of Buffalo, Thomas McCormick of Michigan, and Jeffrey Maddux of Tennessee. During the following period of financial hardship, the newsletter did not appear. It was revived (as Vol. 11, No. 1) by Carolyn V. Prorok of Slippery Rock University who revised it in the spring of 1989.

An early project undertaken by what might be called the "1976 group" was the compilation of an International bibliography on the geography of belief systems. Jack A. Licate, whose 1967 MS thesis, "The Geographic Study of Religions: A Review of the Literature," was the director for this undertaking. By January 1981 he reported the bibliography was 85% completed; and at the same time (Winter 1981), he authored an article in the newsletter titled, "Annotated Bibliography of Atlases of Religion," which contained 88 entries. Whether or not the projected International bibliography was published is unknown to this author, but it seems that its affiliation with any AAG activities disappeared with the decline in the involvement of the "1976 group."



Another project that seems to have not reached fruition was a book on current research in the geography of belief systems, which was to have been edited by Klaus D. Gurgel. The fortunes of this proposed publication apparently declined along with the general involvement of the "1976 group."

As revealed by the listing of the newsletter issues and editors (see above), the organization was maintained in the early 1980s by a different core group of geographers, which might be termed the "early 1980s group." It was during this period that two attempts (one in the summer of 1981 and another in late winter of 1985) were made to become a recognized specialty group of the AAG. Although the newsletter was mailed to approximately 200 individuals in 1983, many recipients were American non-geographers or non-AAG foreign geographers, so the required number of signatures were not obtained for creating an officially recognized specialty group. There were also talks about forming a loose federation with the Geography of the Bible Specialty Group, but no satisfactory arrangements were achieved.

In summary, a loosely structured organization of geographers interested in the study of religion has existed within the AAG since 1976. Even though a few individuals have considered themselves a part of an on-going organization, its vitality has wavered with the rise and decline of core leaders. Its initial strength resulted partly with its international base, yet the difficulties of maintaining active participation over long distances also contributed to the decline of the "1976 group." The dedication of a few workers in the "early 1980s group" produced a worthy newsletter and revitalized sessions at several AAG meetings. However, because some of the most active leaders were graduate students (particularly Tom McCormick and Jeff Maddux), the burdens of time and printing/ mailing costs overwhelmed their limited resources.

It is reassuring to realize that the topic of religion has brought geographers together at annual AAG meetings and through the distribution of a newsletter for many years. Nevertheless, it is also apparent from this brief history that having a common interest per se does not necessarily assure a constantly viable organization.



#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

According to recently received literature, the International Symposium on Pilgrimage Traditions in Vrindavan, India was a success. Dr. D.B. Dubey of Allahabad reports that the Symposium, held from October 14-16, 1990 at the Vraja Academy in Vrindavan, attracted scholars with a wide range of interests. According to the Symposium program, paper topics included such titles as, "Geomancy and Indian Culture", "Some Ancient Buddhist Pilgrim Places of Afghanistan" and "Pilgrims, Promiscuity and Protest-the Salva Centre of Tarakeswara in West Bengal." If you are interested in learning more of the program events or if you would like to correspond with the working group that organized this event, write to Dr. D.B. Dubey at 4A/2/1 Mulrabad, Allahabad, UP 211002, India.



INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

ON PILGRIMAGE TRADITIONS

Geographia Religionum is a series of volumes focusing on GORABS topics and published at Katholische Universität of Eichstatt in Germany. The first two volumes are a collection of papers in German. Volume 3 is entitled, Christian Missions in Africa: A Social Geographical Study of the Impact of Their Activities in Zambia, by Reinhard Henkel and it is in English. The maps featured in this issue of GORABS are from Henkel's study in Zambia. Volume 4 and 5 are published in English and are collections of papers related to the volume titles of, Pilgrimage in World Religion and Pilgrimage in the U.S. respectively. In May of 1988 an International/Interdisciplinary Symposium on Geography of Religion was held at Eichstatt. Volumes 6 and 7 have both German and English contributions from the symposium. An eighth volume in English is planned. If you are interested in the specific paper titles in these volumes and/or purchasing the volumes personally or through your library, then contact Gisbert Rinschede at Lehrstuhl für Didaktik der Geographie, Universität Regensburg, Universitätsstr. 31, D-8400 Regensburg, Germany.

#### GORABS MAP FEATURE

All maps are from Reinhard Henkel's study of Christian Missions in Africa: A Social Geographical Study of the Impact of Their Activities in Zambia, Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1989; Volume 3 of Geographia Religionum, sponsored by Katholische Universität, Eichstatt.

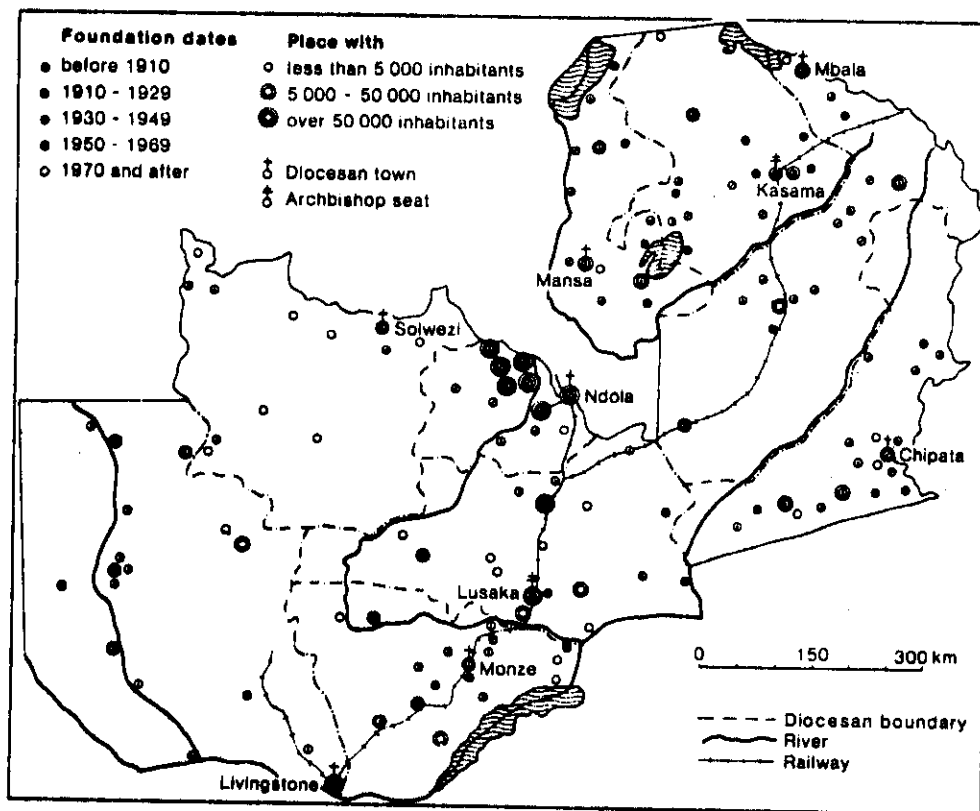


Fig. 15: Foundation dates of the Catholic Church parishes

Source: Compiled by author based on data from REIL (1969) and CATHOLIC DIRECTORY OF EASTERN AFRICA 1981 - 1983, AMECEA Documentation Service, Nairobi (Kenya)

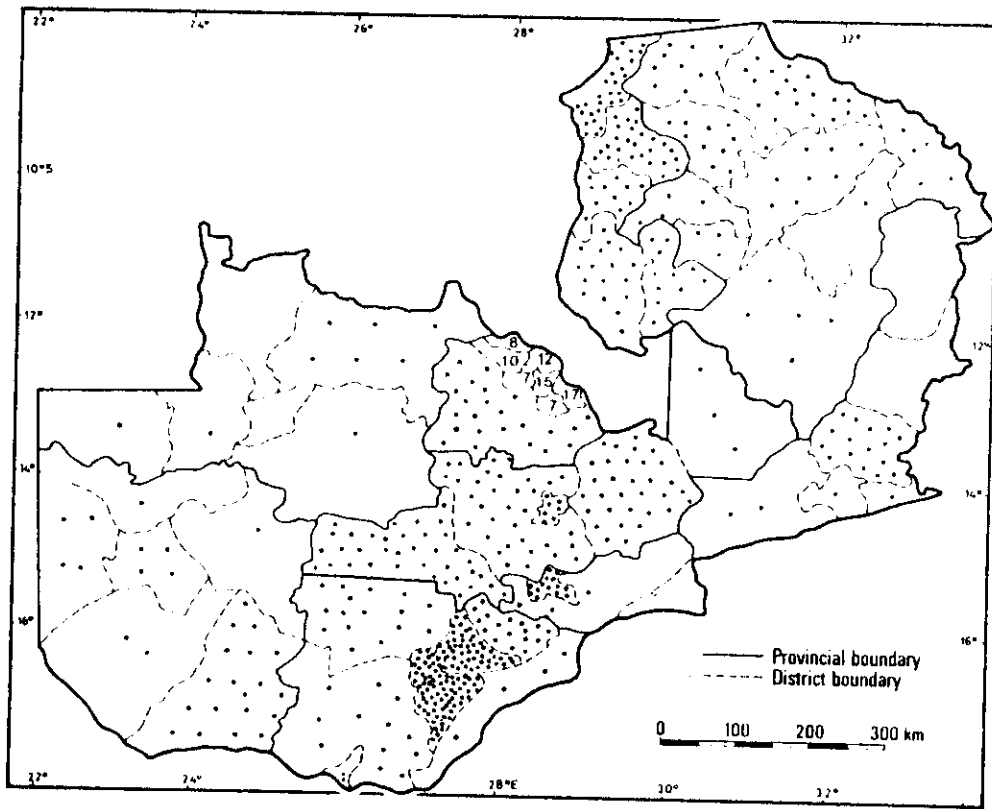


Fig. 22: Churches of the Seventh-Day Adventists

Source: Compiled by author based on data for 3rd quarter, 1983, provided by the SDA Office in Lusaka and by the Registrar of Societies, Lusaka

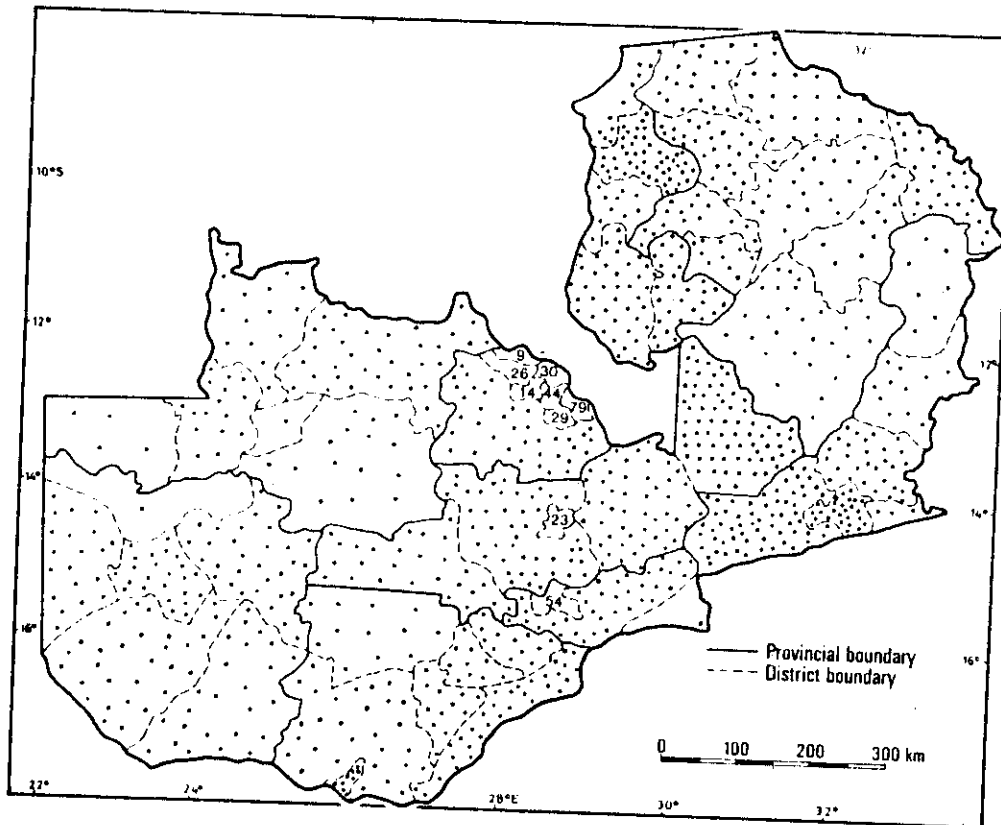


Fig. 33: Registered societies of the Jehovah's Witnesses

Source: Compiled by author based on data for November 1983 provided by the Registrar of Societies, Lusaka