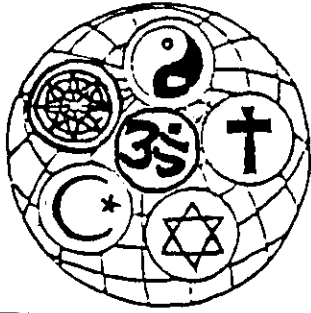


Geography of Religions



& Belief Systems

EDITOR: Carolyn V. Prorok
Department of Geography & Environmental Studies
Slippery Rock University
Slippery Rock, PA 16057-1326
FAX=412-738-2098 BITNET= CVP @ SRU
Volume 13 No. 2 Fall '91

EDITOR'S NOTE

YES! There is an AAG Specialty Group RELIGIONS AND BELIEF SYSTEMS. After many years of concerted effort our working group is now recognized by the national organization. I hope you checked it for membership! Look for the first business meeting listed in the preliminary schedule and plan to be there. Your support and involvement is valuable to the future success of the group. Listed below are the two special GORABS sessions organized by Surinder Bhardwaj for San Diego. We hope to see you there.

I will be on a faculty exchange at Kangweon National University in Chunchon, South Korea next semester. Therefore, the Spring 1992 issue of GORABS will be edited by Surinder Bhardwaj. He welcomes your essays, maps, and announcements. Send them to him at the Department of Geography, Kent State University, Kent Ohio 44242.

SAN DIEGO AAG 1992

Individuals interested in presenting research on GORABS themes continue to support special sessions at the annual AAG meetings. The following program offers a variety of interesting papers.

First Session: Space, Symbol, and Experience

Organizer: Surinder M. Bhardwaj

Chairs: Surinder M. Bhardwaj and Linda Fischer-Pittman

Linda K. Fischer-Pittman Taize, Burgundy's ecumenical monastery.

Joseph H. Hobbs Miracle in the creation, and maintenance of sacred places at Mount Sinai

Adrian R. Cooper Religio-Geographical experience among young people

Surinder M. Bhardwaj Religious symbolism, nationalism, and territoriality

Susan Grabiell Sun now rises in west: new locus for the lotus

Mary Lee Nolan and Mary Smith-Nolan Semana Santa: Video as a medium of translation

Second Session: Spatial Dynamics of Religious Landscape
Organizer: Surinder M. Bhardwaj
Chairs: Surinder M. Bhardwaj and Barbara Weightman

Gail S. Sechrist Where have all churches gone?

Thomas A. Tweed Our Lady of the Exile: devotion at a Cuban-American shrine, and the landscape of contemporary Miami

Barbara Weightman Change and Continuity in the religious landscape of the Los Angeles region

Peter Halvorson Changes in American Jewish settlement patterns

Lorraine Guay Evolution of cemeteries in Quebec city.

Cecyle Trepanier Church shopping and church swapping: the new influence of Protestant churches in French Louisiana

RECENT DISSERTATIONS ON GORAB THEMES

Dissertations

Walsh, Kathleen Dolan 1989 "Cattle of the Moon: Religion and Ritual in the Domestication and Early History of Bos Primigenius in the Mediterranean Region," University of California at Berkely

Fischer, Linda K. 1989 "The Geography of Protestant Monasticism," University of Minnesota

Gross, Robert 1990 "Trends in the 'Islamic' Republics of the USSR: 1914-1986," Ohio State University

Thesis

Knapp, Jill W. 1989 "The Pilgrimage Phenomenon: An Analyses of the Motivations of Visitors to Temple Square," Brigham Young University

GORABS FEATURE ESSAY AND FEATURE MAP

Bill Noble, from the Department of Geography at the University of Missouri in Columbia, submitted the following essay on "Ways to Toda Realms of the Dead," with a map. Bill's work with the Toda reaches back over several decades to his dissertation work on tribal peoples of the Nilgiri Hills in southern India (northwestern corner of Tamil Nadu). Fortunately for us, Bill continues to document the lifeways of the Toda people. In this essay, he presents the Toda's tenets of afterlife and their expression on the Nilgiri landscape. (special note: I reproduced the hardcopy sent to me because I could not replicate the diacritical notation for Toda terms.)

WAYS TO TODA REALMS OF THE DEAD*

William A. Noble, University of Missouri

The Dream Time: In ancient times, during the Dream Time, deities dwelt in the Nilgiris. Some were of considerable size. The Great Creator Goddess called Tö.kiṣ created the Toda and their buffalo, and then established the Toda hamlets and dairies (the temples of the Toda). And for some time in the Dream Time both the deities and the Toda, with their buffalo, lived together and interacted. The buffalo could then talk. But when the Toda became disenchanting with so many buffalo talking back to them, they complained to the gods. Upon holding an assembly, the deities consented to let the god Ti.kwileØy solve the problem. He pulled out the tongues of the buffalo and they have never talked since.

Ö.n and Tö.kiṣ once ruled this world together. When the deities eventually decided that there was a need for one of their number to rule over a Realm of the Dead (Amuno.r), Ö.n was chosen. He was the brother, and in another version the father, of Tö.kiṣ. Many Toda and buffalo assembled to bid Ö.n farewell when he departed to rule over Amuno.r, which he has done ever since. During the Dream Time there was no separation of the living from the dead (who were, after all, simply mirrored spirits of the living). So relatives moved back and forth between the two worlds in order to visit with their loved ones. But the free interchange was ended by Ö.n after an unfortunate incident prompted by the god Kwatöw playing a joke: Kwatöw told relatives of Po.nita.n, who had gone to Amuno.r, that he had decided to stay there. Po.nita.n, when he was returning, met the buffalo which had been sacrificed at a funeral for him. He and the buffalo wept until Marlimund Lake was formed from the flowing tears, and then he had to return to Amuno.r with the buffalo.

After The Dream Time: The Dream Time came to an end and there is no clear oral tradition of what happened in the transition period which followed. Now there are no longer any free social interactions, including a few intimate sexual relationships, or verbal exchanges between the Toda and their deities. Each of the best recognized deities came to be associated with a mountain peak, so these peaks themselves became deities which in spirit form attend the assemblies of deities. Because the dairies were deified, they also in spirit form attend the same assemblies. In the Toda religion, which is uniquely non-Hindu, there is a recapitulation of vital relationships between deities and local environments in the dairy prayers. Thus, there is a returning to the Dream Time and so, in a sense, as Mircea Eliade would put it, an eternal returning to and reconstruction of that time via the dairy rituals.

The Realm Where Most Toda Live: Reservoirs behind dams built for hydroelectric schemes now lie in the very heart of traditional Toda territory (see the map). Much of the former grassland in the territory is now covered by introduced Mexican pines or acacias and eucalypts from Australia. The god mountains Ko.ty and Ko.ntöw were once vital to Toda culture, for *polo.l* priests of the most sacred *ti*. dairies (totally defunct since the 1950s) would annually set fires at the bases of these mountains (annually alternating priests of the Mö.r and Ka.s patrilineal clans at Ko.ntöw) and thus start each annual cycle of events for the people. The god mountain Tö.xaṣ (Nilgiri Peak) is believed to send each annual westerly monsoon on to Ko.ntöw. Tö.xaṣ and the goddess No.tiṣ (Snowdon) were recognized for their skills in diplomacy during the Dream Time, so were turned to by deities and mortals alike when controversies need to be settled. Next to the Toda hamlet of No.s the goddess Tö.kiṣ achieved great acts of creation, and she later came to be associated with the mountain nearby. The seasonal hamlet of Kwṣ is the most southwesterly of the Toda hamlets. Because it is closest to Amuno.r, all pregnant women must depart from it before they deliver their offspring. It is also worth noting that the unique existing grasslands and gallery forests (probably not created by the process of annual firings) to the southwest and west of Kwṣ have, apparently, never had Toda hamlets.

Toda Funerals: The Toda cremate their dead. In the 1800s they would sometimes sacrifice a number of buffalo, with the understanding that those deceased required buffalo for their sustenance in a Realm of the Dead. To meet the minimum requirement, the British colonial

rulers eventually restricted buffalo sacrifice to two animals. The sacrifice of one sacred and one secular buffalo was the accepted norm at the funeral for a male. Only one secular buffalo had to be sacrificed at the funeral for a female. Now, due in part to the influence of Gandhi, a small council of men at the funeral site determines whether or not any buffalo will be sacrificed. Because of the apparent later mirrored imagery, the practice of one clansman of the deceased's patriclan and of wives from the same patriclan, with their husbands, in turn touching their heads with a cloth at the first funeral is mentioned. And mention is also made of the fact that a pestle placed on the pyre at the second funeral for a female was consumed by flames. When there were second funerals in the 1800s and rarely as late as the 1960s, it was believed that the spirits of the departed would proceed to a certain place. They lingered there until the second funeral was performed, and at this place the departed lit fires to warm themselves and to cook food. Now that there are no second funerals (although there remains the slightest chance that some Toda might still make provision for a second funeral), it is believed that the departed spirits will immediately proceed to a Realm of the Dead (after the final bowing down to a smashed pot by those in attendance, the rite that once climaxed a second funeral). The Toda still believe that such spirits may linger for a while at the place of fire and cooking.

Routes to the Main Realm of the Dead: With the exception of all deceased members of the Kerir and To.ro.r patriclans, those deceased of the other thirteen patriclans go to Amuno.r which lies to the southwest (*see* routes 3 on the map). From the sightings of Badaga, Toda and others said to have met Toda who died and were cremated, it is clear that the movement of spirits is associated with the walking of anthropomorphic figures. Thus, departed members of the thirteen patriclans are believed to have generally walked next to the main stream channels as they moved toward Amuno.r, the main Realm of the Dead. Now that the upper (resulting reservoir named after the nearby Mukurti Peak) and lower courses of the Pykara River, and the courses of the Sandy Nala, Parson's Valley, Emerald and Avalanche rivers, and the upper course of a Bhavani River tributary have been filled with water, the departed spirits must walk next to the reservoirs. They finally come by the Avalanche or Emerald reservoirs, move southward to the Bellarambu Halla Valley and go to an area (Y in the map) on the upper and northern side of that valley.

At place 1 the departed leave stones. The practice is reminiscent of a practice followed in the Himalayas, where passersby commemorate a *sati* by throwing stones onto a pile. At the Nilgiri site, no large pile of stone exists. After climbing a remarkable set of natural stone steps (2), formed where a dike outcrops, a spirit follows the dike over a large exposure of charnockite. Where, at lower level and just next to the dike, there is a remnant of exfoliating rock (3), the spirit it said to touch a cloth to the head and to leave the cloth on the rock. Relating this belief to the ceremonial part of a funeral in which people in turn touch a cloth to their heads, there appears to be a symbolic parting from all clothing and thus the associations which the worldly had with clad individuals. The spirit goes up and over the rock exposure (leaving area y), reaches a path (now in part covered by a road built later), and moves westward over it. Along this way, there is forest (*shola*) on both sides (4) and the departed are said to leave scars from knife cuts on the trees. The explanations of our Toda guides as to why we saw no scars is that trees had aged and expired, or that the evidence was obscured by nearby tree growth and because parts of trees had died and fallen.

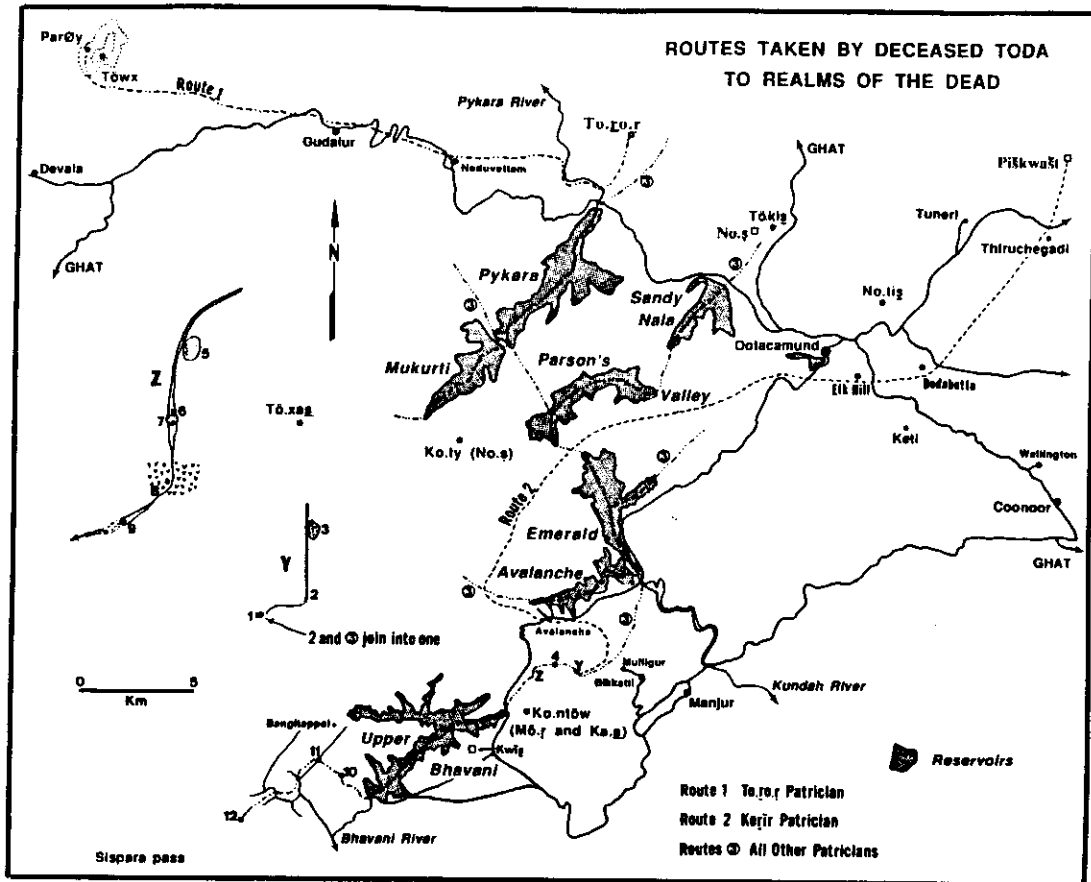
Upon reaching the crest of a ridge running northward from Ko.ntöw, the crest is crossed to the right. Farther down there is the start of a stream. When going downward and next to the stream, the departed lose all attachments to this world. Following the stream, the place of fires and cooking is first reached (5). Fireplaces could be seen in an encampment used by workers who came to plant trees over the nearby slopes, but the argument was made by the guides that at least two of the fireplaces (one included within the space of a ruined hut) had been there previously. Furthermore, the only person who could show us the way told of coming across a still warm fireplace used by a departed Toda when he was a boy. Farther down slope and in the stream bed, there is a vertical stone (6).

Each departed soul touches this with the chest to get rid of all emotional attachments to people and objects of this world. Right next to this stone, extending over the entire stream bed and forming the edge of a slight fall all the way across on the down side, is a large horizontal slab of rock (7). Upon touching this with their feet, the departed lose all touch with the diseases of this world. Where the stream breaks into a grassy swamp at lower elevation, there is a stone close to a footpath through the swamp. The stone has a pronounced crack running through it, and this is said to have been caused by a knife blow administered by a departed spirit. Farther downstream, just before the stream plunges down a rocky fall for some distance, there is a rocky pit centered in the stream (9), a pit evidently formed by swirling waters with small rock abrasives. The pit represents a mortar, and it symbolically seems to be associated with the departed spirits of women leaving behind the last vestiges of anything female which pollutes. The final position of this feature in the stream seems to have some parallel with the last act of placing a pestle (symbol of femaleness) on the funeral pyre in the second funeral, just before the pyre was lit.

After going farther downstream, reaching another stream channel and going down it, the departed move southwesterly between Kwiş and the Upper Bhavani Reservoir. Crossing the dam, they head in a westerly direction to a mountainside with conspicuous rocks (10). Here the departed wash away all ash and any other pollutants of this world. Going on and over a mountain, the departed descend to a deeply entrenched stream (11). Though also called the Bhavanipuzha, this is but one of the Bhavani tributaries with the same name. The stream's valley is one of the most conspicuous valleys of the Nilgiris due to its 1) straight course, apparently controlled by a fracture line, 2) many tributaries flowing straight down into the valley and 3) seeming evidence for uplift in its cross-sections. On the easterly side of the valley departed Toda spirits are greeted by laughing, jolly infant spirits, those who were never provided with funerals. Where a thread bridge is said to cross the stream, there are two rocks on each side, horizontally across from each other. Bad Todas will fall into the stream when they try to cross the thread bridge. Though they will for some time be fed upon by all manner of revolting and wormy creatures, belief holds that a buffalo belonging to each Toda soul will eventually come and take the tormented to Amuno.r. Good spirits reaching the other side, and those released later, move on toward Amuno.r. They are met by spirits from Amuno.r who come to greet them and lead them on. On the way, there is a last test. Each newly arrived spirit is met and chased by a dog. If an individual has never committed incest (classified as sexual intercourse with a member of one's own patriclan) in this life, then his or her spirit will escape from the dog. If such is not the case, the spirit will be caught and is then sexually assaulted by the dog before the gathered crowd. After thus being shamed before relatives who hide their eyes, the punishment is ended and the newly arrived spirit can move on to Amuno.r. There are two separate ways downward at the entrance to Amuno.r, one for Toda spirits and the other for buffalo spirits.

Other Routes: Because the people of the Kerir Patriclan were cursed, all the deceased of this clan cannot cross water over most of their passage to Amuno.r. Thus, spirits must move from Piskwast (the only surviving hamlet of this patriclan) in a course which skirts Dodabetta and Elk Hill (Route 2 in the map), then move over the divide separating Parson's Valley from Emerald Valley and go southwestward so that the upper Avalanche tributary can be skirted. Coming eastward, then, the spirits come around mountains and then move up the Bellarambu Halla Valley. Here they join the route followed by spirits of the thirteen patriclans which also migrate westward. Departed members of the To.ro.r Patriclan are unique in travelling westward to their own Realm of the Dead called ParØy, lying beyond a peak which the Toda call Töwx (Route 1 in the map).

*I am indebted to Murray B. Emeneau, whose scattered data in (particularly pages 318 through 323 in) the 1984 *Toda Grammar and Texts* form the basis of these findings. They are preliminary findings, likely to be changed in part and added to by future field work. Thus, please consult with the author before using any part of the map or text.



THE TODA BLESSING, OOTY, S. INDIA -
 The Toda priest caremoniously blesses a believer.
 Photo - V.B. Anand

ANNOUNCEMENTS

*At the upcoming NCGE meetings St. Paul, Minnesota Bob Stoddard will present a paper entitled, "What is Geographic About Religion."

*I recently received this letter from Mr. D.C. Staniford. His address is Spinney House, St. David's Lane, Noctorum, Birkenhead, Merseyside, L439UD England, UK If anyone can help him with his dissertation research, or if you know of someone who can do so, then contact him directly.

I am an undergraduate at the University of Birmingham, England, currently researching a dissertation on the Geography of Religion. I have most of the published articles on the subject and was put in touch with you by Lily Kong who wrote an article in P.I.H.G. I hope you can be of help, but the angle of my research seems to be a little different. My dissertation focuses on religion's role in shaping culture, and her role in the community. The rise of the Housechurch and Homechurch movements are looked at in relation to the decline of traditional\denominational religion. Obviously the picture is a dynamic one and one which is difficult to measure empirically. The main angle though is towards accessing religions relevance in solving social and environmental problems. It is my wish to be a relevant geographer (One who seeks to improve the social and environmental problems of society) and it seems that the study of the Geography of Religion can assist in it. Unfortunately there is little or no information on this topic that I know of. What I ask from you is information on the AAG, GORABS group and if possible could you direct me in the right direction. Any advice or contacts would be greatly appreciated.

