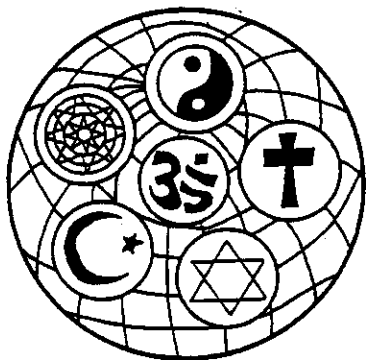


# Geography of Religions & Belief Systems



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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Wind chills of -60F, deep piles of snow and, most recently, an ice storm has everyone around here talking about the worst winter they've ever experienced. I don't stick around for this stuff though. Fieldwork in the Caribbean is just the ticket for cabin fever and a frozen nose. Recently, Clarissa Kimber (Texas A&M) joined me in Trinidad to survey Hindu temple gardens. Look for the results of our work next year. If you have been working on any project that you think our readers would be interested in, or if you would like to solicit help in finding information on a topic, just write to me and I will publish your letter or abstract. STUDENT MEMBERS are especially invited to write about their thesis or dissertation topic. GORABS members can help you with bibliographic resources etc.

The AAG meetings in San Francisco are just around the corner, so you will find the GORABS offerings listed in this issue. If you know that you will go to Chicago in 1995, start thinking about a paper or poster presentation. Consider organizing a session under GORABS auspices. If you decided to do this, contact the chair or secretary of the specialty group so that we can coordinate our efforts. We need new people and new ideas for session themes. Finally, I extend my grateful thanks to Jennifer Good, my student aide, who assists me in preparing the newsletter for mailing.

## GORABS FEATURE ESSAY

INTERPRETATIONS OF RELIGIO-GEOGRAPHICAL LANDSCAPE AND PLACE MEANING AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN AN ENGLISH PARISH by Adrian Cooper

Adrian Cooper hails from Felixstowe, Suffolk County, England. Recently graduated from Birbeck College-University of London, Adrian shares this latest essay concerning his work with a local English parish. If you have an essay or an explication of preliminary work that you would like to share with us, send it to me on disk in WordPerfect and by hard copy.

Geographers have consistently given far greater attention to the cultural meanings which are significant to adults than those which interact with the thought, action and experience of adolescents. Within the religio-geographical literature, this age-bias remains particularly evident. Indeed, within the recent reviews of religio-geographical literature, no single reference directly engaged with adolescent experience. Within the analysis presented here however, I will highlight this gap within the geographical

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## GORABS SESSIONS IN SAN FRANCISCO

Some great sessions are planned for our next national meetings of the AAG. I hope that you plan to be there! In addition I am listing other GORABS related sessions and papers for your convenience. Don't forget to attend the business meeting or our get-together afterward.

Western Themes: Thursday, 8am-9:45am  
Adrian Cooper, "Negotiated Dilemmas in the Interpretation of Landscape and Religious Experience"; Vincent P. Miller, "Kierkegaardian Dogmatics from the Perspective of Spatial Decision Making"; Jamie Scott, "Textual Space and Spatial Context: Black Elk Speaks and the Sacred Geography of Oglala Indian Culture"; Discussion

Asian Themes: Thursday, 9:55am-11:35pm  
Barbara A. Weightman, "Dragon and Phoenix: Discovering Religion in China's Cultural Land-

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**Feature Essay**

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 literature by exploring some of the ways in which adolescent attitudes toward Christian commitment can interact with the meanings of specific places and landscapes shown in cinema films. This discussion is drawn from a more broadly based research project in which I analyze the religio-geographical interpretations of 30 individuals who live in the Parish of St. Peter and St. Paul, St. Andrew and St. Nicholas in Felixstowe, on the south Suffolk Coast in England.

Although the parish church was the most frequently discussed sacred place within the interview discourse for this research, it is also evident that other places and landscapes, from recent feature films, are also consistently identified by these adolescents as texts which inform, and remain informed by, their religious beliefs and interpretations. The most frequently discussed of these films are "Last of the Mohicans," "1492 Conquest of Paradise," "Dances with Wolves," and "Medicine Man." Further, the references to some of the places and landscapes in those films have sometimes been found to reciprocate with the places and landscapes considered in the research interviews which considered these adolescents' everyday lives. Where that reciprocity was detected, it consistently served to clarify each of these adolescents' responses to specific places and landscapes in the films as well as their everyday experience.

The structure of this essay responds to the two principal elements within these adolescents' discourse regarding their religio-geographical critiques of film. First therefore, I will consider the ways in which the filmed character' motivations appeared to these adolescents to embody specific resonances of religious meaning which became expressed in landscapes and places in each film. Second, I will consider the ways in which these religio-geographical experiences of film informed, and became informed by, these individuals' interpretations of the parish church of St. Peter and St. Paul. Inevitably though, this analytical structure remains problematic since it is a direct response to the discourse of specific individuals at a specific time.

Throughout this research, it has remained clear that discussions on the motivation and geographical impact of film characters cut right across the contrasts in these adolescents' varying attitudes toward Christian commitment. Further, that discourse retained a consistent eclecticism which continued to identify it as being distinct from that of the adults with whom I also work. That is, within their individual and collective focus on these four films, and

the religio-geographical themes which they provoked, these adolescents were able to support and illustrate their argument by drawing from a broad range of other religious and secular references identified from their everyday lives and other media sources. Further, the four films considered here were consistently grouped by these adolescents into two pairs: "1492 Conquest of Paradise' and "Last of the Mohicans"; and "Dances with Wolves" and "Medicine Man." The following extracts, all taken from 1993 interviews, show how this pairing was identified at three recent points within this development of these individuals' argument:

Tony: "I mean, OK, you can say that 'Conquest of Paradise' and 'Last of the Mohicans' show, sort of, the grasping side of nations at that time. You know: just not even needing to pretend to do it for God..."

Allison: "There's like a really good message there (in 'Dances with Wolves' and 'Medicine Man') you know, showing people that you don't need to grab, grab, grab all the time to feel satisfied."

Andy: "Look, I know all about how the church carries on, in the Third World and that...and, yes they do do all their good works etcetera etcetera, (hesitation) but they're only trying to get in with those people so they can foist off Christianity on them, aren't they. So it's no bloody different to the way, I don't know, Spain or France, or whatever, (hesitation) or even our people carried on, was it."

Paula: "That's right. (hesitation) The only thing I'd say though, is that in 'Dances with Wolves', where Kevin Costner, or, you know, the bloke he played, kind of tried to at least understand the Indians, didn't he. I mean, he wasn't there to get anything out of them, was he."



St. Peter's R.C. Church in Brownsville, in a drawing by Charles Morse Stotz.

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## Feature Essay

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"Dances with Wolves" and "Medicine Man," were also quoted at length by all the contributors as illustrations of a sympathetic and therefore an apparently admirable form of response to "natural" landscapes. Further, that form of non-appropriational behavior was interpreted as a particular form of religious awareness. In describing this interpretation, each of the adolescents unconsciously substituted the term "spirituality" instead of "religious" in their discussions. In discussing that substitution, it was consistently accounted for, by all the adolescent contributors, as a recognition that while they use the term "religion" to accommodate resonances of rite, ritual, formality and organized structure, "spirituality" was employed in recognition of the more intuitive, unstructured and, in the case of 'Dances with Wolves', a naive response by one man to a landscape, its indigenous population and their mystical co-existence.

This use of "spirituality" was also developed beyond these adolescents' religio-geographical film commentaries of "Dances with Wolves" and "Medicine Man" to inform their discussion of the parish church of St. Peter and St. Paul. This extended use of the term within the reciprocity of personally significant meaning between filmed places and these individuals' relatively greater familiarity with the parish church is exemplified within the following two extracts of discourse:

Allison: "Yeah, that was just nice to see (hesitation) you know, a sort of really free (hesitation) spiritual kind of way of getting on with the Indians (interrupted).

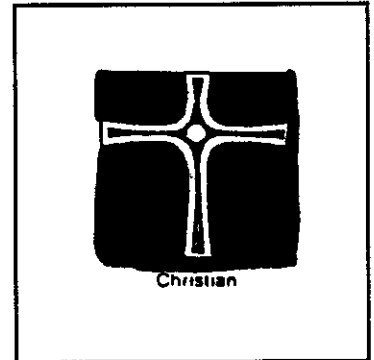
Linda: (angry/frustrated) "And it's a fucking sight better than (hesitation) bloody going to that church (referring to the Parish church) and just thinking what you're told, and singing what you're told to, and God knows what, told to say...it's at least more honest..."

Richard: "...I mean, that sort of spirituality is what Christians need, don't you think? You know? That sort of real openness to God..."

Gregory: "That's definitely right. I mean, if you had a service at the parish (church), and just had a time where you could open up to God, and that was it, you'd have loads of younger Christians, I think...especially those who don't like all the upbeat sort of stuff...you'd find they'd feel a lot more comfortable going to that church then." (group agreement)

From these two extracts, as well as the others which they exemplify, it is clear that a very complex form

of religio-geographic reciprocity is consistent within the discourse. That is, not only is there an interaction between interpretations of place and landscape, and resonances of religious belief with respect to the films, but that reciprocity informs and is being informed by another reciprocity between the parish church, as a place, and these adolescents' differing attitudes toward Christian commitment. Notwithstanding this complexity, these interactions have remained as consistent themes within both the Christian and non-Christian discourse since they first emerged following the release of the "Dances with Wolves" film. As such, it represents a problematic but important form of cultural resistance where the adolescents are clearly drawing upon these specific reciprocities to form a coherent critique of the use to which the parish church is put. That critique consequently interacts with their other principal religio-geographical frustrations with that place.



In addition however, those contributors who abstain from Christian commitment were also developing these religio-geographical interactions between film and everyday life to question the complete integrity of their apparent resistance to orthodox religious faith. That is, there is a resistance within a resistance: while they clearly resist any doctrinal ideology of religious faith, they have also consistently resisted making a complete denial of a "spiritual" way of seeing their everyday environment.

The principal conclusion to draw from this discussion is that it is possible to present a distinctive and coherent religio-geographical analysis which contributes to an understanding of adolescent interpretations of cinema film. Since this religio-geographical discussion has continued as a long-term and detailed project, it has been possible to analyze how this adolescent audience has developed its complicity in the continuous making and re-making process of this cultural meaning over time. Hopefully, this essay will provoke further discussion in this neglected area of work.

## San Francisco

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scape"; K. Ramanathan, "Hindu Temples in Malaysia: Problems and Prospects"; Lily Kong, "The Commercial Face of God: Economics and Its Religious Expressions"; Discussion

GORABS/Geography Education Groups:

Teaching the Geography of Religion: Saturday, 1:30pm-3:15pm -- Carolyn V. Prorok, "Teaching About Religion in an Academic Environment"; Robert H. Stoddard, "Teaching the Geography of Religion: A Taboo Topic?"; Gisbert Rinschede, "Geography of Religions and Public School Geography in Germany"; Mary Lee Nolan, "Video Themes in Geography of Religions"; Discussion

Other sessions and individual papers on topics of interest, but not organized by GORABS are:

Thursday:

1:30pm -- S. McHenry-poster-Diffusion of Church Architecture in N. England

1:30pm -- Facets of the Geography of Religion Session: T.R. Paul, "The Geography of Religion in Virginia"; R. Vermette, "Hagio-geography: The Function of Place in Old French Saints' Lives"; D.A. Sidorov, "The Geographical Context of the Revival of the Russian Orthodox Church."

3:25pm -- Sacred Space and Social Control: Hawaii Session: J.W. Schoenfelder, "Refuge Sites and the Hawaiian Economy of Forgiveness; D. Herman, "The Dread Tabu: Human Sacrifice and Pearl Harbor,"; R. Bordner, "Cultural Landscapes and Dialogs of Power."

3:25pm -- M.H. Bockenbauer, "Yeoman Stewardship, Yankee Pragmatism: Meandering American Beliefs About Land."

3:40pm -- L. Marchin, "The Spatial Distribution of the African-American Population and Churches in Fresno, California."

3:45pm -- M.P. Larkin, "Geographies of the Religious Right: The Impacts of Conservative Social Movements on Local Communities."

Friday:

3:25pm -- Geography of the Bible Session: B.J. Beltzel, "The Geography of the Levant: A Case Study in Geographic Determinism"; C.E. Harrington, "The Geographer and Place: A Toponymic Look at Damascus, USA"; J.J. Lu, "Putting Eden on the Map?"; L.A. Boenigk, "Famine in the Perspective of Biblical Judgement and Promises: A Commentary"

4:05pm -- W.V. Davidson, "Plaza-Church Relationships in Honduras."

4:45pm -- D.A. Iyegha, "The Evolutionary Process of Jerusalem (Jebus)."

Saturday:

8:00am -- American Indian SG; Sacred Places: Changes, Pilgrimages and Issues: S.C. Jett, "Change and Navajo Sacred Places"; K. Forbes-Boyte, "The American Indian Religious Freedom Act's Effect on Bear Butte"; J.M. Williams, "Documenting and Protecting Traditional Cultural Landscapes Using GIS"; D.L. McDonald, "Pilgrimages to South Texas: Changes Along the Peyote Road."

## GORABS FOCUS ON:

### Thomas A. Tweed

Tom is an assistant professor of religious studies at the Department of Religious Studies, University of North Carolina, CB# 3225, 101 Saunders Hall, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3225. He also taught religious studies at the University of Miami for a number of years. Tom's education began at Pennsylvania State University and then continued at the Harvard Divinity School with an MTS in the History of Christianity. Completing his graduate work with an MA and a PhD in religious studies at Stanford University, Tom's work has focused on religion in America. In his work, he has developed a strong relationship between religious behavior, locality and landscape. Thus, Tom's research represents the rich intellectual harvest possible when we are fertilized by the work of individuals in different, yet related, disciplines. In an earlier edition of the newsletter, I announced his recent book, The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844-1912: Victorian Culture and the Limits of Dissent. In addition, look for the following: "Introduction: Hannah Adam's Survey of the Religious Landscape," Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Denominations, by Hannah Adams, Classics in Religious Studies Series, reprint (1817; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), vii-xxxiv. "Diaspora Nationalism and Cuban Immigrants: Identity, Landscape, and Devotion at a Catholic Shrine in Miami," in The Gods of the City: Religion and the Contemporary American Urban Landscape, ed. by Robert Orsi (forthcoming, IU press). "Inclusivism and the Spiritual Journey of Marie de Souza Canavarro," Religion 23 (January 1994), 1-6. Tom has written much more, and he has a number of projects in progress. If you are interested in Tom's work, just drop him a line.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

FROM THE EDITOR: Thank you Barbara Weightman for sending the syllabus for your Geography of Religion course at CSU-Fullerton. We are still collecting syllabi, so if you are working on one or have worked on one; CONTACT US.

Also, Barbara Weightman informs us that her article, "Changing Religious Landscapes of the Los Angeles Region," is forthcoming in the Journal of Cultural Geography, Fall/Winter 1993, Volume 14:1.

The University of Pittsburgh, Dept of Religious Studies, recently produced a video entitled, "Journey of Faith: Orthodox Ritual in a Serbian American Community." Fred W. Clothey directed this work about a Serbian community in Pittsburgh. If interested, write to: Video Production Services, A114 SLIS, 135 N. Bellefield Ave., U.P., Pgh, PA, 15260.

### GORABS SOCIAL EVENT

Meet in the Marriott lobby after the business meeting on Thursday, March 31 (about 7pm). We will decide our evening event there. GOOD FOOD AND CONGENIAL COLLEAGUES are hard to beat after a long day of session hopping. So, don't miss out on this one.

## GORABS BYLAWS

An article from the bylaws is highlighted until the entire set is published.

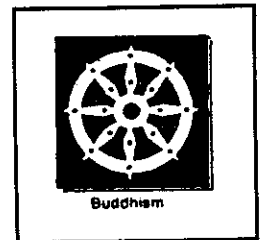
### Article IV: Officers

GORABS is administered by a Board of Directors (hereafter referred to as the Board) consisting of the following six officers; a Chairperson, a Secretary-Treasurer, a Past-Chairperson, and three Board Members elected at-large. One of the Board members will be a student. No person may hold more than one Board position at any time except under the temporary conditions specified in Article VI. The Board will exercise general supervision over the affairs of the GORABS and will legislate policies deemed to be in the interest of GORABS and the AAG. The Board will perform its duties and abide by the limitations specified in these Bylaws and the governing Council of the AAG. The Board shall report its actions and decisions to the Annual Business Meeting of the GORABS (see Article VIII). The Board will meet at least once each year during the time of the AAG national meeting. The Board may conduct additional business electronically, by regular mail, telephone, or directly in meetings as needs arise.

### GORABS BUSINESS MEETING:

Our annual meeting will be held on Thursday, March 31 at 5:30pm. Look for the location in your program. Election results will be announced and new projects discussed. YOUR input is valuable, so please put the meeting on your list of important things to do!!!

ALLAN GLEASON, one of our original members, presently lives in El Paso, TX. He writes to us: "Congratulations on the latest newsletter. The improved typography and layout - which I assume was largely the responsibility of someone in campus publication services or whatever -- might easily divert the reader from the even greater improvement in content. I haven't seen all the specialty group newsletters by any means, but I have always judged the GORABS one superior to all those that I know, largely because it has always had some content beyond mere organizational matter and non-very-pertinent chitchat about a few of the members - usually the little elite that run the group. This as usual, has some significant content in appreciable variety. I particularly comment notes such as those on R.P.B. Singh and E. Whittaker. Could we try for one such on an established non-northamerican and one on a neophyte each issue? Only a very strange geographer will find this newsletter ho-hum, like so many of the others. ...This fall I heard J.B. Wright of NMSU give a talk on the Mormon country for a general audience. It was very well done. His general interest is in land management, conservation and the like. ...Wright is now working on Montana, and has been, among other things investigating a fairly large settlement of one of those ultraright, militaristic "churches". ...Congratulations on the latest newsletter (and pass that along to whoever did the physical production)!"



Allan suggest we read J.B. Wright's book: Rocky Mountain Divide: Selling and Saving the West, University of Texas Press, 1993. It contrasts environmentalism in Colorado and Mormonism in Utah regarding conservation and landuse.

Editor's Reply: Thanks for the compliment Allan. Our Office of Communication Services deserves the credit for layout and physical production. So when are you going to send me your vita? I also think that you should review Wright's book for the newsletter. Let's plan for a fall 1994 publication. See you in San Francisco!

**GORABS QUESTIONNAIRE**

I am working with Clarissa Kimber on a project concerning gardens at Hindu temples in Trinidad. Our question is this: have any of you seen gardens (formal or informal) at Hindu temples anywhere else in the world, but particularly in the homeland-India? If you have (or even if you haven't) drop me a line describing what you have observed. Also, if you have any references on the subject of gardens at Hindu temples, we humbly request you share them with us.

**Dakota; A Spiritual Geography**

The following is drawn from a New York Times Book review by Verlyn Klinkenborg of Dakota: A Spiritual Geography, by Kathleen Norris. (NY: Ticknor & Fields, 1993). This excerpt is intended to whet your appetite. I hope some member will give a geographer's perspective on Ms. Norris' work!

"Dakota, by which Ms. Norris means western North and South Dakota, is a desert: it gets little rainfall, and yet its deprivations can be nourishing. The spirituality Ms. Norris finds in the landscape around her is not a metaphor or a New Age idealization. It is doctrinal, calendrical, liturgical, and it has its roots, though Ms. Norris is a married Protestant woman, in the early medieval meditations of the desert fathers." ... "It was the plains," Ms. Norris writes, "that first drew me to the monastery, which I suppose is ironic, for who would go seeking a desert within a desert?"

**GORABS NEW MEMBERS**

GORABS extends a warm welcome to our new members:

Camille Kirk	UC, Los Angeles
Gregory Knapp	UT, Austin
Sharon Knight	Roosevelt U., Chicago
Matt Krigbaum	UO, Eugene
David Lashell	Redlands, CA
Deryck Lodrick	UC, Berkeley
Jack Maguire	USC, Columbia-SC
William McBryer	Ohio University, Athens
John McCalden	Arlington, VA
Darrel McDonald	SFASU, Nacogdoches-TX
James Miller	Clemson University
Cindy Newman	UO, Eugene

**!VOTE!!VOTE!!VOTE!**

GORABS' first official elections are being held now. If you are a dues paying member of the AAG, then you are eligible to vote. You should have received a ballot in the mail already. Please take a few moments of your time to select from the list of candidates. Then mail the ballot to Surinder Bhardwaj at, Dept. of Geography, Kent State University, Kent, OH 44242 by Feb. 28. Thanks for your cooperation!



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