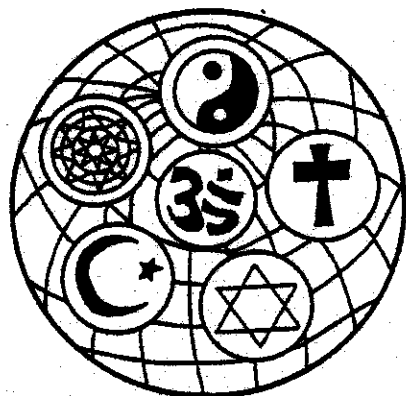


Geography of Religions & Belief Systems



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EDITOR'S NOTE

San Francisco was a wonderful site for the national meetings. This jewel of a city on the bay attracted record numbers of our colleagues. Next year the bustling, midwestern city of Chicago will host our collaborations. Look for announcements in this newsletter and elsewhere for sessions and awards. We will elect new board members next winter who we hope can further energize the meeting environment. We ardently request your participation. If you want to organize a special session, try your hand at chairing a session, or, of course, present a paper--contact me at your earliest convenience. I will be in Malaysia from mid-June to late August; so if you don't catch me before I leave the States, contact another board member, or wait until I return. GORABS wants your time, energy and expertise. It is absolutely necessary if we are to become a vibrant, active, productive community.

Now, I would not want to disappoint you by not making my regular, and occasionally nagging, request for announcements, essays, book reviews, vitae and other sundry materials for the newsletter. Several people have promised me "stuff," so I will wait with bated breath--sort of. But, I have lots of room to fill yet. Tell us about your awards, publications, new projects -- or if you are just plugging away at one that still captures your undivided attention. We look forward to hearing from YOU.

GORABS FEATURE ESSAY

MIRCEA ELIADE: RESTORING THE POSSIBILITIES OF PLACE by Robert Mugerauer (reprinted with permission from the Environmental & Architectural PHENOMENOLOGY Newsletter, Winter 1993:10-12).

Robert Mugerauer teaches in the School of Architecture at the University of Texas at Austin, Sutton Hall, Austin, TX 78712-1160. This essay includes sections from his forthcoming book, Interpretations on Behalf of Place: Environmental Displacements and Alternative Responses, SUNY Press series, Volume 2, "Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology."

For Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and other postmodernist thinkers, the belief that we can penetrate to any reality or truth is a delusion imposed for the sake of dominance by one historical regime following another. These thinkers claim that we must courageously confront our present situation with a

(Continued on Page 3)

ELECTION RESULTS

Our new Secretary-Treasurer is Robert Stoddard, at-large Board Members are Barbara Weightman and Jeanne Kay, and the student Board Member is Carol Cameron. GORABS extends congratulations to those elected and appreciates the willingness of all the candidates to become more involved. Thanks go to all participants, especially Richard Jackson, Mohammad Hemmasi and Dan Donaldson, who were also candidates.

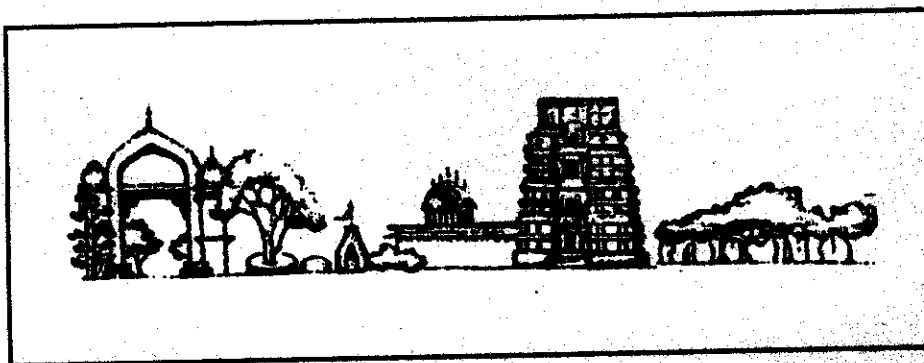
Only 28 people returned ballots this year. We hope we have more candidates and more ballots next year!

GORABS MINUTES

The following are an abbreviated version of our meeting notes in San Francisco. Present were Surinder Bhardwaj, Mary Lee Nolan, Carol Prorok, Claudia Lowe, Barbara Weightman, Bruce Crews, Dmitry Sidorov, Henry Gleason, Allan Gleason, Bob Stoddard, Gisbert Flinschede, Richard Jackson and Clarissa Kimber. If I missed anyone, please let me know and I will announce it in the next newsletter. Let's see more people next year!

Annual Business Meeting Minutes;
Carol Prorok-recording secretary;
March 31, 1994

1. Nolan, as SG Chair, opens meeting.
2. Bhardwaj, as past-Chair, announces election results.
3. A. Gleason moves to destroy ballots and Weightman seconds. Approved.
4. Bhardwaj calls for continued support of past board members.
5. Jackson moves to give heartfelt thanks to Bhardwaj for his work and support of GORABS and Nolan seconds. Approved.
6. Stoddard suggests we stagger changing board members. Rinschede is asked to remain on the board this year for this purpose, and that we determine changes in by-laws this year. A. Gleason moves, Bhardwaj seconds. Approved.
7. Prorok reports we had \$461.01 accumulated in our account from dues, and another \$313.00 earned this year; yielding \$774.01.
8. A. Gleason moves and Weightman seconds a special thanks to Slippery Rock University for underwriting the cost of the newsletter, thus allowing GORABS to apply our funds in other directions.
9. Prorok reports she is purging the newsletter mailing list. More than a dozen newsletters were returned last month.
10. Nolan reports from the SG Chair meeting that the AAG: wants to get more involved in public policy making, should play a greater role in the National Securities Education Program, is considering an earlier deadline for abstract submission, will an-



nounce pre- and post-meeting activities of the SG's in the program and provides funds for non-geographer presenters in special sessions.

11. Members discussed student paper awards. We will ask Mrs. Sopher if we can present an award in David Sopher's name. The board will decide the criteria for the award before the end of this academic term. A. Gleason will produce the award certificate.
12. We have received only two syllabi for Geography of Religion courses. Encourage members to send more information on what they teach.
13. A. Gleason is working on a GORABS bibliogra-

phy. Its dissemination is still under discussion with possible publication by the GORABS SG.

14. Prorok will pursue the acquisition of our own stationery.

15. We should start a listserv for GORABS.
16. Gisbert announced new *Geographia Religionum* volumes.
17. Discussion of Chicago meeting and possible special sessions.
18. Meeting adjourned.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Darrel McDonald, member of GORABS and the Biogeography SG's, announces a special session at Chicago '95 on "Sacred Plants and Landscapes." Several people have already decided to present in this session. If enough people contact him, there may be two sessions. His address is Dept. of Geography, Stephen F. Austin State University, Box 13045, SFA Station, Nacogdoches, TX 75962-3045; 409-568-3903; F_MCDONALDDL@CCSVAX.SFASU.EDU

Feature Essay

Continued from Page 1

relentless honesty, which means violently stripping away our comforting illusions and forcefully undoing past interpretations by inserting our own.

At the same time, these postmodernist writers argue that we must not allow any illusory validity to adhere to our arbitrary, though necessary, dislocations and substituted constructions. Instead, we must become open to the only remaining possibility—the free play of language and other sign systems. Interpretation becomes a strategy of liberation from the oppression and bodily bondage of our culturally built world. At the end of the history of human habitation as dislocation, *only violent, liberating displacements would be within our power.*

In striking contrast, other powerful thinkers acknowledge the current crisis in meaning but contend that the skeptical position of Foucault and Derrida is neither necessary nor the most appropriate response. One such thinker is the Rumanian-American scholar of religions *Mircea Eliade*, who works to show how our historical situation and relativistic theories occupy a peculiar place in the history of the world and of the West in particular.

Eliade contends that we still can contact primal sources of meaning and value that have *not* been eliminated, but only ignored, in Western rationalistic views. What is called for, he argues, is a turning away from our metaphysical prison and the seductive image of ourselves as technological and literary creators of meaning. Instead, we must seek new ways to open up to realms beyond ourselves, which still come to us existentially, manifesting the dimensions of reality in which we can dwell.

Participating in the Sacred

Eliade uses phenomenological and hermeneutic methods to discern, describe, and interpret the essential features of such phenomena as myths and rituals, religious images and symbols, sacred and profane time and space.¹

As a phenomenologist, Eliade's approach is rigorously empirical, describing but not judging what appears to become manifest in various religious experiences and traditions. As a hermeneuticist, Eliade believes that we can retrieve the substantive meaning of religious phenomena, even from cul-

tures to which we never did, or no longer, belong. Eventually, we may understand reality more fully and find a deeper meaning of the cosmos.

Eliade differs from Derrida and Foucault, not only in his analysis of our contemporary problem, but also in his assessment of the actual situation and possibilities. Eliade recognizes our anxiety in historicism's wake. As a correlate of believing that there is nothing transcendent to history, modern culture generally believes it is trapped inside linear time and unable to escape.

Hence, our current existence in time is understood via historicism where the flow of time changes and determines everything. The result is fear in the face of our impending death and the apocalyptic end of our civilization. We are lonely and estranged from the world.

According to Eliade, historicism and its anxiety have resulted from the displacement of religion as a mode of access to the sacred and the subsequent desacralization of the modern world. He also holds that we unnecessarily "put up with a nihilistic and pessimistic vision of the world" because we have rejected the access to reality which is still possible (1957b:239). We have imprudently discarded the wisdom and comforts available through contact with other and earlier cultures and with a transcendent reality.

But Eliade also contends that we have a viable option to seeing human habitation as only historically delimited and thus, today, inaccessible. Rather, he believes that sacred reality is still available, either as a means to understand other cultures or in itself.

Hierophany and Myth

Throughout his work, Eliade explicates the primal difference between the *sacred* and *profane*. All things in their ordinary, merely natural or made character are profane. They are used and understood in an unexceptional way. But, according to Eliade, the sacred manifests itself in this world by showing itself in or through things: natural things, built forms, language, symbols and so on. The sacred breaks through the homogeneous into the world and establishes the world, making it what it is—an act of sacred manifestation that Eliade calls *hierophany* (1957a:11;

1963:6). Since some things participate in the sacred, they become differentiated from the rest: they become saturated with Being and significance.

Further, our built world participates in the sacred cosmos by homology. The built world is able to repeat the sacred patterns, a possibility which means that some things are able to help establish and hold on to the sacred. Things and the built can participate, and thereby have meaning in, the homology between the human condition and the structure of reality.

Built and natural things, however, have this meaning only insofar as they orient toward the cosmic and display the sacred. Eliade claims this orientation and display crucially depend on *myth*--a narration of sacred events that occurred in the beginning, *in illo tempore* (1963:1). Myth is crucial because it holds the paradigmatic sacred events themselves.

As opposed to the modern view, which takes myth to be an object of study and curiosity and its supposed source--sacred reality--to be fiction, Eliade contends that myth is the basis of the lived experience of a culture, since myth makes models manifest, thereby giving meaning and value to life (1963:2). The repetition of myths, according to Eliade, enables culture to recover or repeat the sacred epiphany. In other words, living *mythos*, though primarily "sacred story," becomes linguistic and graphic symbols, and also actions and deeds--that is, rituals--which display the sacred story. And one crucial means of manifesting cosmic order and events is the built environment.

Implications

Eliade's hermeneutical phenomenology aims to open to the epiphany and transformation of the sacred, to "the emergence of a reality and the

disclosure of its fundamental structures" (1957b:15). The task is to pass beyond ourselves, to the *other*, in a manner congruent with actual experience of access to the sacred (if not the access of an indigenous participant, at least that appropriate to someone on a genuine quest). Eliade moves into religious experience and existence through the "exercise of the phenomenological attitude in opening to this material on its own terms and allowing essences to appear"

(W.L.B. & S.O.Y. *The Seeing Eye*, PA. St. Univ. Press, 1982).

Eliade's approach specifically applies to the built environment and yet is broad in its scope of what can be described "from the inside." Most of the human habitation on earth, from earliest times until recently in the West, and still in many parts of the world, has been a participation by *homo religiosus* in sacred modes of being and building.

In such traditional life, built form and culture belong together, by way of myth, since they both participate in the sacred by being homol-

ogous with it. In a sacred cosmos, techniques of orientation are also techniques for the *construction* of sacred space, and built form is an *imago mundi* (1957a:29 & 53).

Originally the work of the gods, such techniques and forms in human habitation have been reproduced and continued through human work. Accordingly, Eliade's hermeneutical phenomenology is of great practical importance to understand how specific peoples dwelt in the cosmos, according to their particu-

From Eliade's Images and Symbols:

The most commonplace existence swarms with images and symbols. Let us repeat... that symbols never disappear from the *reality* of the psyche. The aspect of them may change, but their function remains the same; one has only to look behind the latest masks....

The life of modern [people] is swarming with half-forgotten myths, decaying hierophanies and secularized symbols....They are no less interest for all that. These degraded images present us the only possible point of departure for the spiritual renewal of modern man.

It is of the greatest importance, we believe, to rediscover a whole mythology, if not a theology, still concealed in the most ordinary, everyday life of contemporary man; it will depend upon himself whether he can work his way back to the source and rediscover the profound meanings of all these faded images and damaged myths.

But let no one object that these relics are not of interest to modern man, that they belong to a "superstitious past" happily liquidated by the nineteenth century... or that it is all right for poets [and] children... to satiate themselves with nostalgias and images, but for goodness sake let serious people go on thinking and "making history."

Such a separation between the "serious things of life" and "dreams" does not correspond with reality. Modern man is free to despise mythologies and theologies, but that will not prevent his continuing to feed upon decayed myths and degraded images....All that essential and indescribable part of man that is called *imagination* dwells in realms of symbolism and still lives upon archaic myths and theologies... hence the failure of man "without imagination;" he is cut off from the deeper reality of life and from his own soul (NY: Sheed & Ward, 1969, pp. 16-20).

GORABS FOCUS ON:

WILLIAM A. NOBLE

Bill is associate professor of geography at the University of Missouri; Columbia, Columbia, MO 65211. Bill Noble was born and raised in southern India. He migrated to the United States in 1950 where he completed his PhD in geography with a minor in anthropology at Louisiana State University in 1968. Much of Bill's work has focused on tribal cultures of the Nilgiri Hills, especially the Toda people. Other research interests include architectural geography, the symbolic basis of certain house and temple types in South Asia, Indian Megalithic Cults, devotional suicide by women in India and their memorialization/deification (sati). Bill exhibits his work; for example, Sati Memorialization and Worship in India (with photographs) in the Brady Commons Art Gallery at the University of Missouri (1985) and more recently at the 22nd Annual Conference on South Asia-Madison, Wisconsin (1993). Because Bill's work is so extensive, I cannot report it all. Contact him about his work.



"The Toda and their dairies (in the Nilgiris, South India), East Lakes Geographer (1989), 24:99-116. "Terrestrial-celestial models and the renaissance of monumental architecture in South Asia," in A.B. Mukerji and Aijazudin Ahmad (eds.) India: Culture, Society, and Economy--Geographical Essays in Honour of Prof. Asok Mitra: 117-159 (1985), New Delhi, Inter-India Publications. "Kerala-style Hindu temples," Chapter 10 in Allen G. Noble and Ashok K. Dutt (eds.), India: Cultural Patterns and Process: 195-220, Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press. "The architecture and Organization of Kerala style Hindu temples," Anthropos (1981) 76:1-24 and 8 plates. "Toda dwellings and temples," Anthropos (1966) 61:727-736. "Badaga funeral customs," (& Louisa B. Noble), Anthropos, (1965) 60:262-272.

ADDRESS CHANGES

The editor appreciates notification of address changes as soon as they are known. From this point onward, any person's newsletter returned to due to change of address, will be eliminated from the mailing list immediately.

GENERAL CALL FOR PAPERS

A general call for papers on a religious theme for the Chicago 1995 meeting. Carol Prorok will organize and/or chair sessions based on your submissions. Send her an abstract, registration and fee by Sept. 1, 1994. Contact her if you would like to organize or chair one of these sessions.

Feature Essay

Continued from Page 4

lar, local version of the broader traditional homology of human body: house: cosmos (1957a:172 ff).

According to this traditional mode of dwelling, the sacred initially established, centered, and ordered the world so that it could become a place *to live*. Because of origin and foundation, a group's sacred dwelling place is opposite "the chaos of the homogeneity and relativity of profane space" and is not intelligible in the latter's terms (1957a:22).

For people living immersed within a profane view or otherwise preoccupied with the profane and hence living outside the sacred cosmos (as our current culture is), it would be all but "useless" to look for the sacred. The latter always would be hidden, as unintelligible, since it is wholly other.

Thus, the advantage of Eliade's sympathetic method: allowing the essence of sacred phenomena to appear on their own terms provides access impossible to either merely objectivistic (purely empirical) or subjectivistic approaches, since the deep reality behind the order of the built environment is opposite to both the objective and subjective. Eliade's approach allows for an attempt to recover the underlying cosmological-ontological meaning and structure of primal and many contemporary ways of life.

¹Central works by Eliade, all published by Harper & Row in New York, include: The Sacred and the Profane (1957); Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries (1957); Cosmos and History (1959); Myth and Reality (1963); The Two and the One (1965); and The Quest (1969).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FROM THE EDITOR; Titles that have come across my desk include the following: Beliefs and Holy Places: A Spiritual Geography of the Pimeria Alta by James S. Griffith, University of Arizona Press, 1993. Dam That River!: Ecology and Mormon Settlement in the Little Colorado River Basin, by William S. Abruzzi, University Press of America, 1993. Defenders of the Faith: Inside Ultra-Orthodox Jewry by Samuel Heilman. The Culture of Disbelief by Stephen L. Carter, Basic Books, 1993. Sacred Architecture by A.T. Mann, Element Books, 1993.

NEW GEOGRAPHY OF RELIGIONS BOOK!

Lily Kong, NU of Singapore, noticed an interesting advertisement from Routledge. Forthcoming in July is a new book titled Sacred Worlds: An Introduction to Geography and Religion by Chris Park. Here it is: Chris Park explores the definitions of religion, its historical and ideological origins and its development. Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and their numerous offshoots are all described. The wide range of material drawn from these different belief systems is set within the context of religious, demographic, political and economic change. The nature of sacred space as place of pilgrimage and as cultural landscape is also analysed. The book enriches our understanding of the ways in which religion has mapped our world.

From the description, I believe this book may be the first attempt to replace Sopher's important, but dated, contribution to the field. I also believe that it is imperative that one of our members review the book for the newsletter. The paperback edition is \$20-25. Contact Routledge at 29 West 35th St. NY, NY 10001.

GEOGRAPHIA RELIGIONUM:

Gisbert Rinschede, Universitat Regensburg, announces that forthcoming volumes of Geographia Religionum will focus on the following themes: #10-Pilgrimage in Central Europe; #11-Monastic Geography; #12-Historical Geographies of Religion. Contact him for more information. (Address, Page 7)

NEH AWARD: C.V. Prorok received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to conduct fieldwork on Hindu temples in Malaysia.

NEW PROJECT: Tom Tweed, UC Chapel Hill, informs us that he is directing a collaborative project that aims to rewrite the narratives of American religious history. The working title of the collection, which is expected to go to the publishers in 1995, is Siting the Narratives of American Religious History. He is emphasizing the placement of narratives and narrators and using the image of cultural, social, and geographical "sites" (such as churches, the body, women, race, the American West, Ecuador etc.) to unify the volume. The project is funded by Lilly and Pew.

STUDENT RESEARCH: Elsbeth Robson, a graduate student in the School of Geography at the University of Oxford, Mansfield Road, Oxford, OX1 3TB, England responded to my request for news on students' work. She reports, "I am writing a PhD thesis on gender relations in Muslim northern Nigerian households and have completed 15 months of fieldwork in a Hausa village in Kano state, Nigeria. I am particularly interested to know if any GORABS members know of literature, or bibliographies, on the general theme of 'women in Islam' which I may have missed in my UK and Nigeria-based literature searches. Particularly, I am concerned with details of any comparative material on Muslim communities elsewhere in Africa, especially with reference to gender." Thanks Elsbeth. I am sure some of our members can recommend recent work published here.

GORABS NEW MEMBERS

GORABS extends a warm welcome to the following new members:

Diana Eck
Clarissa Kimber
Morton Klass
Emanuela Guano

Harvard University
Texas A & M Univ.
Barnard College
U. of Heidelberg, Ger

GORABS EXECUTIVE BOARD

Chair: Carol Prorok, Dept. of Geography & Environmental Studies, Slippery Rock University, Slippery Rock, PA 16057-1326; 412-738-2384 (2188 Fax); cvp@sruvm.sru.edu

Past-Chair: Mary Lee Nolan, Dept. of Geosciences, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR 97331-5506; 503-737-1206 (1200 - Fax).

Secretary-Treasurer: Bob Stoddard, Dept. of Geography, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68588-0135; 402-472-2865 (1123 - Fax).

Board Members: Barbara Weightman, Dept. of Geography, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634; 714-773-3161.

Jeanne Kay, Dean-Faculty of Environmental Sciences, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, ON N2B 2Y9. 519-885-1211.

Gisbert Rinschede, Dept. of Geography, Universitat Regensburg, Regensburg, Germany 93040 0941-943-4396.

Student Member: Carol Cameron, Dept. of Geography, Kent State University, Kent, OH 44242, 216-672-2045.

GORABS PAPER AWARD

GORABS will present an award to the best paper presented by a student and/or a non-tenured faculty member at the 1995 Annual Meeting in Chicago. Submissions are due by next winter.

You must present at the conference to be eligible. Criteria and application forms will be ready this summer and are due early next winter.

We will send information to each department later. You may contact any board member for information in the future.

GORABS BYLAWS

An article from the bylaws is highlighted until all are published.

Article V: Duties of Board Members

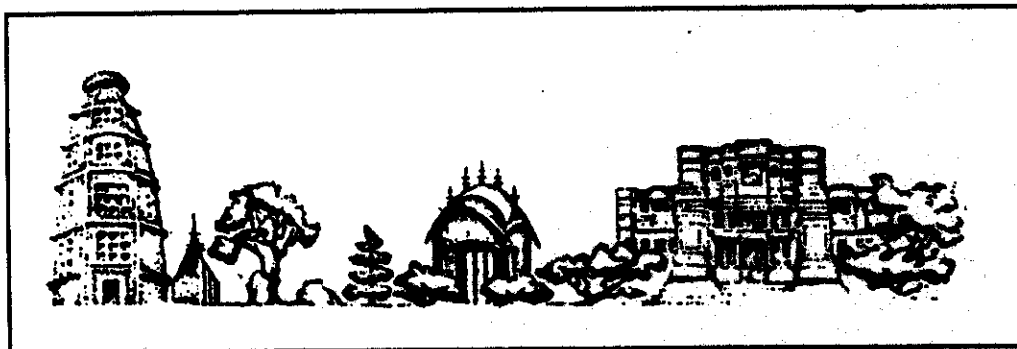
The duty of the Chairperson is to preside at all meetings of GORABS and the Board, to convey information to and from the Board, GORABS members, and governing Council of the AAG, to perform all duties inherent in the office throughout the year, and to submit an annual report of this specialty group as required by the AAG.

The duty of the Secretary-Treasurer is to preside at meetings in the absence of the Chairperson, to keep records of all meetings of the Board including the annual business meeting, to distribute and supervise the counting of mail ballots, to administer the financial affairs of GORABS, and to report the financial status of GORABS at the Annual Business Meeting and at other times as requested by the Chairperson or the Board. Ballots with information about candidates for GORABS offices will be mailed to all GORABS members via special mailing, which will originate from the Secretary-Treasurer.

The duty of the Past-Chairperson is to chair the Nominating committee, to preside in the absence of the Chairperson and the Secretary-Treasurer, and to carry out other duties as requested by the Chairperson or the Board.

The duty of each at-large Board member is to help organize, or designate another GORABS member to organize, one or more paper/discussion panel session at each AAG national meeting. These sessions may be jointly organized with other interested specialty groups.

Article 6 will be in the next issue.



****GORABS NEWSLINE****

The editor is happy to include in GORABS any news about you or your program that would be of interest to our members. Please type or print legibly. Also, send your vita to the editor for our focus section.

Name:

Address:

E-Mail:

Telephone:

Fax:

Research in Progress:

Recent Publications:

Program Activities:

Awards:

****GORABS NEWSLINE****

Department of Geography and Environmental Studies
Editor: Carolyn V. Prorok
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