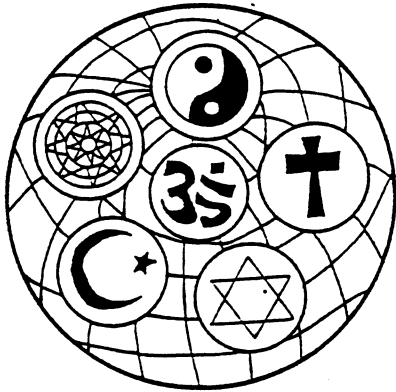


Geography of Religions & Belief Systems



Editor: Carolyn V. Prorok
Slippery Rock University
Department of Geography and Environmental Studies
Email: carolyn.prorok@sru.edu
Phone: (412) 738-2384

Volume 19: Issue 3

Fall 1997

EDITOR'S NOTE

This edition of the newsletter will be relatively short, however, it includes a number of important inserts. Please direct any inquiries concerning the inserts to the persons/address listed therein. Our spring edition of the newsletter will have valuable information on special sessions at the Boston meetings. Until then, have a restful winter break and a productive spring term.

I would also like to encourage members to submit their essays and reviews for future publications. I have materials for the fall issue, but will need your contributions to prepare the summer and fall issues for next year. If you have a map or graphic associated with your submission, please make sure it is of publishable quality from the outset and note the format of the newsletter for its dimensions. You can contact me if you have any questions.

FUNDING FOR THIS NEWSLETTER IS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES AT SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY

GORABS Review Corner*

CHANTS OF INDIA 1997 Angel Records, Produced by: George Harrison, Ravi Shankar. Review by Chandra Balachandran, Department of Geosciences, North Dakota State University, Fargo, ND 58105-5517, balachan@plains.nodak.edu

Immigres yearn for the best of the old home, the roots of much of their identity. That re-connection is with a place which is the source of an inner essence. Immigres from India can reach very deeply into the past and work their way to the contemporary, finding along the way, a wonderful current of syncretistic cultural tradition. India's cultural history cannot be understood without understanding this syncretistic tendency. Tapping into it is a good means to achieving not only individual inner connection with oneself, but with larger humanity as well, because the core of the syncretistic tradition profoundly connects, indeed identifies, the individual with the cosmos. Indians are not the only ones who need this refreshment, everyone does. This CD is an example of an attempt to provide precisely this.

Continued on Page 3

INSIDE:

- Chants of India p. 1
- Focus On Emmett p. 2
- SOPHER AWARD!!! ... p. 2
- GORABS Proposal p. 2
- Announcements p. 2
- PG Issues p. 4



GORABS FOCUS ON:

Chad F. Emmett

Dr. Emmett is assistant professor of geography in the Department of Geography at Brigham Young University for the past six years. Previously, he was an Indonesian linguist and an instructor of English as a second language. Completing his PhD in geography at the University of Chicago in 1991, Dr. Emmett's work has focused on the religious cultures and landscapes of southwestern Asia. In this regard he has a number of notable publications as listed below. If you would like to correspond with Dr. Emmett about his work, you can contact him at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 84602. (801-378-7886 or Fax 5978) chad_emmett@byu.edu

Beyond the Basilica: Christians and Muslims in Nazareth, 1995 Chicago: Chicago University Press.

"The Capital Cities of Jerusalem," 1996 *The Geographical Review*, 86:2:233-258.

"Political Manifestations in the Religious Landscape of Jerusalem," 1993 *Architecture and Behavior*, 9:2:261-274.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Adrian Cooper announces the publication of his new book: *Sacred Mountains: Ancient Wisdom and Modern Meanings*. See insert for more details.

Anthropologist, photographer, and world explorer Martin Gray wishes to introduce GORABS readers to his extensive web site at <http://www.sacredsites.com>. During the past fifteen years Martin has traveled widely in forty countries around the world studying and photographing sacred sites, pilgrimage shrines, megalithic stone rings, holy wells and many other places of archaic and contemporary sanctity. Combining a deep textual knowledge of ancient religions, shamanism, archaeology, and spirituality with his long-time personal experience of the pilgrim's life, Martin brings a unique perspective to the study of sacred geography and ecopsychology. His web site features many beautiful photographs, an extensive bibliography, numerous links to related web sites, and current information regarding his international lecture schedule. During 1998 Martin will be visiting nearly 150 sacred places in fourteen countries of Central and South America; following these travels, he will present his PLACES OF PEACE AND POWER slide show in the twelve major university cities of Latin America. Martin Gray may be contacted at PO 4111, Sedona, AZ 86340 or by e-mail through his web site.

The Society for the Anthropology of Religion (SofAR) is on its way to becoming a recognized division of the Association of American Anthropologists. As with those scholars interested in the geography of religions, anthropologists seek to illuminate the human condition via critical analysis of religious systems and practices. For more information or items for the newsletter contact: Eileen M. Mulhare, SofAR Treasurer, c/o R.D. 2, Box 38, East Lake Road, Hamilton, New York 13346. Fax: 315-824-3967 or emulhare@center.colgate.edu

SOPHER AWARD

Each year the GORABS specialty group honors new scholars in the field with an award named for the late Professor David Sopher. Applicants must present a paper on a GORABS theme at the AAG meeting to be considered. Applications and rules of order are enclosed in this edition of the newsletter. Please take a moment to complete it and compete for this prestigious honor. Last year in Fort Worth we had a number of excellent applicants. Sinclair A. Sheers, from the Department of Geography and Earth Systems Science at George Mason University, won in the student competition for her paper: "Christian Mappaemundi and Jain Religious Maps: Comparative Created Worlds." Her abstract is below:

Religious maps facilitate a spatial understanding of what is important in religious life and beliefs of the map maker and the map maker's culture. Until recently, comparison between Christian religious *mappaemundi*, or "cloth of the world" (Harvey 1991), and Jain religious maps has not been explored. Although western map historians have studied *mappaemundi*, most scholars compared *mappaemundi* unfavorably to maps that depict concrete geographical features more accurately. Though Jains have been making maps of their religious cosmos for hundreds of years, westerners have only begun to study these maps. A comparative analysis of Christian and Jain religious maps allows us to recognize important features in each religion and culture and to read each type of map more closely. Both Christian *mappaemundi* and Jain maps have unique structure and plans that make them more similar than dissimilar. The aim of this paper is to draw attention to these two types of religious maps, to define similarities and differences between them, and to see how they reflect their cultures' power and values. Both religions ignore empirical data about the physical universe to create an alternate universe with a new set of landmarks, symbols, and rules. These map makers redefine 'truth,' what makes a map a map, and what is included in a map. These maps may not help one get to the local supermarket, but they show how to get to heaven or to eternal enlightenment which, ultimately, is more important.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

*Geography in America
at the Dawn of the 21st Century*

In 1989 the AAG sponsored a special publication on the state of geography that received excellent reviews. The AAG is planning another such volume and GORABS will be included. The GORABS specialty group is announcing a call for proposals by member(s) wishing to (co)author the essay representing our field. Please send your name(s), affiliation(s), and contact information with a one-page statement that outlines your ideas for the chapter to: Dick Jackson, Department of Geography, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 84602. The deadline for submission of proposals is January 31, 1998.

GORABS Review Continued from Page 1

I could not help notice the beauty of the packaging. The motif is “AUM” in devanAgarI script in cyan blue, with a deep blue background. Deep blue is the color of the ocean, an important metaphor for profundity and confluence in Hindu thought. It is also the color of the Primordial Sound (“anAhata shabda”), “AUM.”

The CD is a compilation of hymns from various classical texts, and also a few compositions by Ravi Shankar, with universal peace, well-being, and harmony as dominant motifs. This made the significance of the color scheme I mentioned above even more appropriate and attractive.

The sleeve notes are extensive and well-done. The classical material is well-referenced. There is a brief introduction by Ravi Shankar in which, among other things, he writes about the “three magical notes used in the Vedic chants from time immemorial ... “He also gives the Western equivalents for these. For each piece, the samskr̥tam original in devanAgarI is provided followed by transliteration and simple, concise translation into English, and then a summary.

The opening piece is “vandanA trayI” (three salutations) with opening music (Ravi Shankar playing the three aforementioned notes), followed by: a hymn to gaNesha, the remover of obstacles (sung soothingly, but with erroneous diction); to sarasvatI, the goddess of learning (left incomplete — ABSOLUTELY no justifying this, it is grammatically incomplete, and aesthetically pathetic); and to the preceptor as the trinity embodied.

The second is a ‘traditional prayer’ — read: ‘of unknown origins.’ Hindu religious practice is quite replete with such, often very beautiful, poetry. This one is a hymn to the Primordial Sound, ‘AUM,’ sung beautifully and with excellent diction. It is very meditative and aesthetically pleasing.

Tracks 3 and 14 include vedic (correctly: vaidik) chanting authentically done from various parts of the upaniShads. They are the first good recordings I have heard, but these chantings are never to be mildly in the background — they must be up front and reverberating, all else must recede into the background. That is the best way to bring out the meditative ideas in them, which will be with us during the subsequent silence of meditation. Here, the music interferes with the richness of the chanting by being too much in the foreground. That said, though, the selections are utterly beautiful!! A sample from the selections:

+ “Wherever you have observed faultless deeds performed, you should follow those alone, and no others. When you have seen us, your teachers, perform good actions follow those alone.”

And finally, of particular significance for us, geographers:

+ “The [E]arth is established in my body.

The body in my heart.

My heart in me.

Myself in the immortal, the immortal in brahman.”

Life-affirming ideas connecting the individual with the Cosmic in the grandest of Indian traditional discourse. At once elevating and humbling, at once exciting and profoundly calming, the translations are simple and beautiful.

There are other selections from the vedas sung by a chorus of musicians. These are generally sung well, but not uniformly so (with good diction and pronunciation, but I am not sure if the cadence is authentic):

*Lead me from untruth to Truth (asato mA sad-gamaya) *

That is perfect, this is perfect (pUrNamadah pUrNamidam)

The gAyatrI mantra (AUM bhUrbhuvassuvah) is excellently done!! The ‘mother of all mantras’ (gAyatrI: lit. “that which protects the singer” gAyantam trAyati iti gAyatrI). The rendition is clear, with all the right pauses, cadences, and accents. This one track alone makes purchasing the CD worthwhile. The mantra is repeated several times — which in the case of most of the other hymns is a tad boring, especially when there are mistakes being repeated.

The hymn to the conqueror of death (tryambakam yajAmahe) is derived from the rudra mantra (hymn to shiva). It is also rendered quite melodiously, though the “trya” is annoyingly mispronounced as “triya”, but, I found myself willing to overlook this one.

From the II chapter of the bhagavadgItA is “To your duty alone hast thou right ... (karmaNyeVAdhikAraste).” It is well sung with an interesting parenthetic note following translation (“this is not an excuse for inaction!”) — a nice addition!!

“May He protect us both (sahanAvavatu)” is one of the most profound of the shAnti mantras which a teacher and his pupil recite together (and indeed many people do in many other contexts as it is an evocation of unity). Sad to say, this has been severely mangled on this CD!! Repetition of this hymn over and over with the mistakes is so annoying that I was left wondering if the CD will sell just because of Ravi Shankar’s name on it!

Important to note in the “non-priestly renditions” of the vedic chanting on this CD are the voices of women in the chorus. This is an extremely important and highly commendable facet of this CD. I have never heard women chanting the vedas, a fact often justified on the basis of ‘tradition.’ Including women makes a powerful statement and is to the credit of the producers of this CD. Also, there are several musical interludes with various instruments (santoor, vInA, veNu, sitar, harp, tabla, mrdangam, etc.) which are very soothing indeed. Genius is at work here! Unfortunately, the addition of some lyrics composed by Ravi Shankar is rather jarring. The music for these is good, but the lyrics, coming after such greatly poetical selections, are, to be kind to the artiste, weak at best.

**PENNSYLVANIA GEOGRAPHER
ISSUES TO BE PUBLISHED SOON**

A substantial number of worthy submissions to the *Pennsylvania Geographer* for the GORABS special issue has resulted in two special editions of the journal to be published this fall and next spring. A selection of topics for the fall issue range from ecospirituality, the Jewish environmental movement, Navajo landscapes of healing to the role of religious structures in the settlement history of Indianapolis. Several of the papers in the second issue include an analysis of a Hindu sacred city, a history of the mythical locations of Noah's ark, and Native American perceptions of the sacred in the natural world.

Those of you who are not dues paying members of the Pennsylvania Geographical Society can still purchase one or both of these issues from the general editors. Each issue (Fall 1997 and Spring 1998) is \$10. Add \$2.50 each for overseas postage. Make your check or postal money order out to *The Pennsylvania Geographical Society*.

Order now as supplies will be limited. Send your check/money order to Bill Kory, Editor PG, Department of Social Sciences-Geography, University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown, Johnstown, PA 15904 or email him for more information: koryupj@vms.cis.pitt.edu Fax: 814-269-7255

GORABS REVIEW

Continued from Page 3

The repetition of hymns should have been minimized, and the compositions of Ravi Shankar (one in 'Sanskrit,' one in Hindi) could well have been replaced by others,' even contemporary, poetry of greater beauty which would have augmented the richness of the CD immensely. Despite the flaws, this CD is worth possessing. I, for one, am happy that my CD player has some sort of programming capability so I can select which tracks to play, thus skipping most of the annoyance and enjoying the rest of the CD... which is truly material to be played with rich bass surround-sound as the sun rises over the eastern horizon.

* This is an earlier version of a review reprinted with permission of INDIA CURRENTS, Sept. 1997.

IT'S TIME TO SHARE

Members and friends of GORABS now have an opportunity to share their resources in the furthering of our academic specialty. You can support the monetary gift that accompanies the Sopher Award by making a donation to GORABS-Sopher Award when you re-up with the AAG this fall. In the box for Voluntary Contributions just squeeze in the amount with a notation of GORABS-Sopher Award. Similarly, you can donate to our (one-time student support) Hawaii Fund. Make sure you note GORABS-Hawaii. These donations are tax deductible and, moreover, documented on your AAG form. **DON'T MISS THIS IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE.**



SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY
Department of Geography and Environmental Studies
Editor: Carolyn V. Prorok
107 Spotts World Culture Building
Slippery Rock, Pa. 16057-1326

