Anthropology

The first use of the word ‘anthropology’ in English was recorded in 1593, but its modern use to indicate the study and science of humanity became current in the late nineteenth century. At that time a separate discipline had begun to evolve from many component strands (including history, archaeology, linguistics, biology and anatomy), and the study of so-called ‘primitive’ peoples was given impetus not only by the reports of individual explorers but also by the need of colonial powers to define and classify the unfamiliar populations which they governed. From the ethnographic writings of early explorers to the 1898 Cambridge expedition to the Torres Straits, often regarded as the first truly ‘anthropological’ field research, these books provide eye-witness information on often vanished peoples and ways of life, as well as evidence for the development of a new scientific discipline.

The Todas

A qualified physician with interests including neurology and psychotherapy, W.H.R. Rivers (1864–1922) was influential in the rise of experimental psychology as an academic discipline. He also pioneered the ‘talking cure’ for shell shock during the First World War. In 1897 Rivers was appointed a University Lecturer at Cambridge, and the following year he joined a Cambridge expedition to the Torres Strait to study the indigenous people’s powers of perception. Rivers’ experiences in the Torres Strait kindled his interest in anthropology and kinship systems, and in 1901–2 he obtained a grant to study the genealogies and customs of the Todas, inhabitants of a high plateau in south-west India. This illustrated book, published in 1906 and regarded as a standard ethnography for half a century, was the result. It focuses on the Todas’ elaborate dairy rituals, and the prayers associated with them, before describing many other beliefs, customs and ceremonies.
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The Todas

WILLIAM HALSE RIVERS RIVERS
THE TODAS
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THE TODAS

BY

W. H. R. RIVERS
FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

It has been my object in writing this book to make it, not merely a record of the customs and beliefs of a people, but also a demonstration of anthropological method. The great need of anthropology at the present time is for more exact method, not only in collecting material, but also in recording it, so that readers may be able to assign its proper value to each fact, and may be provided with definite evidence which will enable them to estimate the probable veraciousness and thoroughness of the record.

With this idea in my mind I have tried to describe as fully as possible the way in which my account has been built up, and have been careful to point out the different degrees of trustworthiness of different portions of my story. Perhaps I have been so anxious to make it clear when my record is of doubtful value that sometimes I may have laid undue stress on its uncertainties and deficiencies.

I have tried to make a clear distinction between my description of Toda custom and belief, and any theoretical conclusions drawn by myself, and have kept the latter for sections at the ends of chapters or for special chapters, of which those numbered xi, xix, xxix and xxx are the most important.

It may be thought by some that the book is unduly loaded with minute detail, and I am myself aware that I have often complicated, perhaps even obscured, the story I am telling by the mass of detail with which it is accompanied. I have had,
PREFACE

however, no scruples on this score, partly because I wished my readers thoroughly to grasp the nature of the material on which my account is based, but still more, because details which may seem insignificant or trivial are often of great importance in the comparative study of custom and belief.

I have not attempted such a comparative study of Toda institutions. It was often very tempting to suggest resemblances with the practices of other peoples of the present or the past, but the result would have been to swell the book to unwieldy dimensions, and perhaps to have obscured the description of the life of the people. In giving parallels for Toda custom I have therefore limited myself to examples from other parts of India, and even here I have only dealt with a few resemblances which illustrate certain suggestions made in the final chapter on the origin and affinities of the Toda people.

In conclusion, I am very glad to express my gratitude for help received from many sources. The researches on which the book is based were undertaken in consequence of the award to myself of the income of the Gunning Fund of the Royal Society for the years 1901–2, and my work was also assisted by a grant from the British Association. In India I received every assistance from those whose official positions gave them the means of helping me, and my thanks are especially due to Mr. Edgar Thurston, whose kind interest and assistance I cannot sufficiently acknowledge. I owe much to the care and attention with which my two interpreters, P. Samuel and Albert Urrilla, performed their duties, and I am greatly indebted to the managers of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society at Ootacamund for the services of the former, and to Mr. C. M. Mullaly and Mr. Hadfield for giving the latter leave from his forest duties in order that he might help me.

Of friends in England I am especially indebted to Dr. C. S. Myers, who kindly read nearly the whole of the book in proof; to Syed Ali Bilgrami for information on various points connected with Indian custom; to Don M. da Zilva
Wickramasinghe for reading Chapter xxv, dealing with the language; and to Mr. H. N. Webber for help, especially in the revision of the genealogical tables.

Most of the illustrations in the book are from photographs taken under my direction by Messrs. Wiele and Klein of Madras, and I am indebted to H.M. India Office for permission to make use of illustrations from the late Colonel Marshall's work *Travels Amongst the Todas*.

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PHONETIC SYSTEM

The following is the phonetic system which has been used in this book. The use of many of the signs is more fully described in Chapter XXV.

Vowels.

\( \acute{\text{a}}, \text{ the a of father.} \) \( \text{\textit{3}}, \text{ the aw of law.} \)

\( \acute{\text{a}}, \text{ the u of hut.} \) \( \acute{\text{u}}, \text{ the u of full.} \)

\( \text{\textit{3}}, \text{ the e of meet.} \) \( \text{\textit{3}}, \text{ the German vowel.} \)

\( \acute{\text{e}}, \text{ the e of met.} \) \( \text{\textit{ai}}, \text{ the i of bite.} \)

\( \text{i}, \text{ the i of hit.} \) \( \text{\textit{eu}}, \text{ the French diphthong.} \)

\( \text{o}, \text{ the o of pot.} \) \( \text{\textit{oi}}, \text{ the oy of boy.} \)

Consonants.

\( \text{\textit{b}}, \text{ as in English.} \) \( \text{\textit{h}}, \text{ used for a sound of} \)

\( \text{\textit{ch}}, \text{ the ch of church.} \) \( \text{doubtful nature} \)

\( \text{\textit{d}}, \text{ used in the text for the} \) \( \text{(see p. 611).} \)

\( \text{English sound and} \) \( \text{\textit{j}}, \text{ as in English.} \)

\( \text{also for the lingual} \) \( \text{\textit{k}}, \text{ as in English.} \)

\( \text{consonant} \text{\textit{d},} \text{ the ch of augh.} \)

\( \text{\textit{f}}, \text{ as in English.} \) \( \text{\textit{l}}, \text{ used in the text for} \)

\( \text{\textit{g}}, \text{ the g of sing.} \) \( \text{the English sound} \)

\( \text{\textit{gg}}, \text{ the g of finger.} \) \( \text{and for the lingual} \)

\( \text{\textit{gh}}, \text{ the ch of ich.} \) \( \text{consonant} \text{\textit{l}.} \)

1 One of the most frequent consonantal sounds in the Toda language is \textit{dhr} which in the text always stands for \textit{dr}; when \textit{d} comes before \textit{sh}, it also represents the lingual sound. In both cases the \textit{d} was hardly appreciated by my ear, and the European will perhaps most nearly imitate the Toda sound if he pronounces \textit{dhr} and \textit{dsh} as \textit{r} and \textit{sh}.
PHONETIC SYSTEM

- \( m \), as in English.
- \( n \), as in English.
- \( ñ \), a nasal \( n \), as in French.
- \( ñ ', \) as in English.
- \( r ', \) as in English.
- \( s \), a sound resembling the English \( s \).
- \( sh \), as in English.
- \( t \), as in English and also for the lingual \( t \).
- \( th \), the \( th \) both of though and throw.
- \( z, \) as in English.
- \( zk, \) the \( z \) of zeal.

Sounds represented by \( ch, s, sh, \) and \( th \), very frequently inserted euphonically in Toda words, have usually been omitted. I have also omitted the signs showing the long vowels whenever a word occurs frequently throughout the book, and the glossary should be consulted to ascertain the correct method of pronouncing such words. Similarly, Appendices III and IV should be consulted to ascertain the proper pronunciation of the names of places and plants.

I do not use the plurals of Toda words, either in the English form or in that proper to the Toda language; thus, I write “the two palol” and not “the two palols” or “the two palolam.”

MAP.

The names printed in the same type as \( kãrs \) are those of Toda villages; the names in italics, as \( Nanjanad \) are those of Badaga villages; the names in small black type, as Ootacamund are those of towns with a general population, or of \( dák \) bungalows.
THE TODAS