

SONGS OF THE TODAS OF THE NILGIRIS

B.C. Deva and J. Kuckertz

This short report on the music of the Todas is a series of two or three on the music of certain tribes of southern India. The authors propose to publish similar reports on the music of the Irulas and the Kotas.

The study, carried out in 1971, was financially supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft — the German Research Foundation, Bonn, W. Germany. The authors are grateful to the Foundation and the officials of the Tamil Nadu Government for all help and kindness. They also record their thanks to the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi for lending the services of the first author for this survey.

The present paper is a reshaped version of two earlier ones: B.C. Deva, "The Todas and their Music," Folklore, March 1973, Vol. XIV. No. 8 and J. Kuckertz, "Gesänge der Toda," Musicae Scientiae Collectanea. Festschrift Karl Gustav Fellerer zum 70. Geburtstag. Köln: Volk-Verlag 1973.

Note on Indian Notation

1. There is no common system of notation that is known and/or accepted throughout India; neither does any notation used for classical music suit folk music. Therefore, the Paluskar system has been adopted here as the most suitable for the present purpose; some alterations and additions have, however, been made.

As is almost invariably the case, there is so much of rubato in actual performance, the notation given here is not much more than a well knit skeleton and is only an approximate transcription.

2. Time—For the sake of uniformity one semibreve (♩) is taken as equal to one matra. Since a close equivalence has to exist between the

staff and Indian notation, this equality of matra to semibreve has been kept constant.

3. *Tempo* (लय) is shown by metronomic count. Eg. लय = 96 means that one matra has a duration of 96 metronomic ticks per minute.

—Authors

The Todas are an ethnic group of interest in many ways. Now numbering a little over 700, they are inhabitants of the Nilgiri Hills in Tamil Nadu. As a matter of fact, this tribe is confined only to the areas contiguous to Ootacamund.

The origins and relations of the Todas is still a disputed question. Some hold that they are migrants from outside India. Their physique and ways of life lend support to this. But according to their own legends, the Todas have been in this country for ages and confined to the hills of the Nilgiris. Their language, while sounding different from the Dravidian group, has a large base of Kannada, Tamil and Tulu.

This people are cultivators and milkmen by tradition. Their main occupation is rearing of the buffalo and selling its milk in the local market. Indeed, the animal is their main wealth and also a totem. The story is related of how a British officer, some decades ago, went to meet them prior to the arrival of the then Prince of Wales and to inform them of his coming. He described the great wealth and power of the Prince, and tried to impress upon them his grandeur. An elderly Toda listened to the talk for some time and then asked, "It is all glorious; but how many buffaloes does your Prince have?"

The settlement of Todas is called a *mandu*, each of a few huts. The typical and traditional house is a kind of hemispherical thatched construction called the *arsh*. The entry is by a small narrow doorway and one has almost to crawl to get in and out of the *arsh*. Even their temple—known as the *polsh arsh*—situated a little away from other *arsh*-s and surrounded by a low stone wall is of this shape.

The God worshipped in the *polsh arsh* is Thekish (Teikirzi). It was not possible, however, to get inside the shrine to see what was there. But from whatever information could be obtained, we gathered that Thekish was the god left to the Todas by the Panca Pandavas. The Pandavas were the original gods but they left behind Thekish to pray to. Some Todas, however, denied this but said that Thekish was their original god. The offering given comprises of fruit and buffalo milk, for the animal is sacred. Its head is painted on the *polsh arsh* as a totem and they treat it with great respect. The attachment to the buffalo is so reverent that it has led to a curious attitude to cultivation. Because the buffalo eats grass, grass becomes sacred. Since grass grows in the

earth, the earth is divine. Therefore, the earth cannot be tilled. In effect, the Todas in bygone days would not dig the earth, but used to live only on naturally available fruit and vegetable, besides milk.

However, on one special day the animal is sacrificed. On this particular day, a select group of Todas take a consecrated buffalo deep into the woods and sacrifice it to Thekish and partake of it; no woman is admitted to the ceremony.

Many of these customs, however, have disappeared with the urbanization and the contact with other cultures. Today, it is difficult to see the *arsh*, one or two of which are maintained as a tourist attraction. The people have taken to the ways of the city and become businessmen. Many of them have become 'educated' and one lady is (1971) studying medicine in the U.S.A.

Of particular interest is their music of which they have a little. First, men and women never sing or dance together. When occasions demand they always sing separately. The tune is called *negishmi*. It is almost a chant, very much like that of Nagas of North-East. The melody, which is very simple, is interspersed with vague grunts. Curiously enough there seems to be only one basic tune for all their songs. Apart from fine internal variations, it is indeed difficult to make out the differences in the music. Words, however, change from song to song to suit the theme. There are songs of welcome, of blessing, of death, of buffalo sacrifice and so on. The text of the song is known as *kannushmi*.

Another interesting fact is that the Todas do not have any musical instruments. As a Toda told us, their ancestors have laid it down as a law that no Toda should touch or play any instrument. If a member of the community does touch an instrument he becomes polluted and is treated as an outcast. But when they wanted to have an instrumental ensemble, they used to employ the Kotas, another tribe of that area; and the Kotas are a very musical people, with songs, reed pipes, flutes and drums. They were engaged by the Todas to play for them. But even then, the music was only for funerals! The Todas do not employ musicians for any other ceremony—happy or unhappy.¹

The Kotas, besides being the musicians for the Todas, were also a kind of scavengers. They are craftsmen and artisans; but they were also engaged for the removal of carcasses of animals. Thus they used to carry away the dead buffaloes from the *mandu-s* and were perhaps carrion eaters. Consequently, for long they were looked down upon by all neighbouring societies. Within the last few decades a change has occurred, particularly due to the Kotas getting reformed in their lives. They have now abstained from many noxious habits with the result they have stopped their scavenging work for the Todas. Further, many of them have even refused to act as funeral musicians.

Today, due to the efforts of Governmental agencies, the Todas have given up much of their ancient ways of life and it is rare to come across an old traditional Toda.

Because of their singular habit and culture, different from the surrounding societies in many respects, the Todas have attracted till today the attention of visitors and researchers. The most eminent book about this tribe, W.H.R. Rivers, *The Todas* (London 1906) enumerates already 42 publications, the first of them issued in 1812. Tribal system, language, and religion of the Todas as well as their ritual referring to the buffalo were well observed in the past. Since the Todas describe all events of their tribal life in songs, the words of these songs were collected and examined to get a clear picture of their culture. The largest collection, comprising 260 poems, was brought together by M.B. Emeneau in the years 1936-38 and published in his book *Toda Songs*, Oxford 1971. Emeneau concentrates on the words only. He mentions at some places that the melodies of these songs are important but does not give any of them in notation. Earlier authors hardly esteem Toda chants as songs.

Since not only the melodies of the Todas but also the musical styles of other tribes have scarcely been investigated, we undertook a journey to the Nilgiris in January 1971 visiting two Toda settlements, one in the vicinity of the Botanical Garden at Ootacamund (Udakamandala), the other one, at Nirkatji (Nirkasi) or Nirkachimandu by name, about 12 km away. Our sojourn at these places lasted only a few hours each, and this was just time enough to record the songs on tape and to write down — or to get an impression at least, of — the words. But the few recordings show already that the melodies of these songs have a structure of their own. And very important, there is no immediate resemblance to the music of the neighbouring tribes.

As in villages of other tribes, we asked the Todas for pieces which are usually sung at events such as birth of a child, marriage, or funeral etc. But a look at the words of the recordings makes it clear that our visit became the inspiring factor of their singing. Strictly speaking, they performed only three songs appropriate for other occasions: the marriage song (no. 3) which is possibly sung when the bridegroom along with his father visits the bride and her parents in their house to pay reverence and to hand over a piece of dress²; the "lullaby" (no. 4), perhaps not bound to a particular time or ceremony; and the dirge (no. 8) accompanying the slaughter of a buffalo which should be at the dead's disposal in the other world.³ One of the remaining songs (no. 6) is intoned to warn a larger public assembled in honour of visitors or prominent personalities against improper conduct and drinking alcohol. One other song (no. 2) addresses the omnipotent goddess Tō.kisy (=Teikirzi). Apparently these two songs were rendered — or extempore composed — to respect our visit; it may have been necessary to make the assembly cautious, while the song to Tō.kisy speaks about the visitors in the third person. The other four songs (no. 1, 5, 7 and 7) address us, the visitors, immediately.

Here the singers use, as always for composition of their poems, preformed combinations of words, *i.e.* lines or parts of lines which can also be found in other songs. Emeneau (in *Toda Songs*, p. xlvi) calls this kind of art "formulaic poetry", and he says in addition that with the Todas "the poet is not expected to search for originality of verbal expression or for originality in his statements about himself and his fellows and their place in the universe", but that "the poet's verbal originality seems to lie in the expertness of the choice which he makes from the stock of traditional formulas in set pieces, when he wishes to allude to any particular event or situation" (*op. cit.* p. xlvii).

This "poetical technique" comes best to light in the dance with which we were saluted at Nīrkāṭji. For this, ten men formed a tight circle. They touched each other with their shoulders and joined their arms. Three of them held each a rod vertically in their hands. While dancing, the men made very small steps rightward; thus the circle moved counter-clockwise. Attitude and movements of the dancers displayed great but controlled power. The men accompanied their dance by an equally vigorous, strictly rhythmical recitation of a poem on different pitches (see transcription, no. 9). Four parts have to be distinguished in this type of chanting: 1. the soloist who improvises — or composes extempore — the poem line by line; 2. a group which repeats the last two syllables of the preceding combination of words; 3. and 4. two groups who shout *hau-hau* one after the other. The latter keep the rhythm constant to regulate the steps.⁴ This type of song is called *kon*; it accompanies the dance for funerals and for several rituals of clans and settlements.⁵ Rivers, who had the opportunity to see the dance during a funeral, describes it thus: "The men formed a circle and danced round in slow step; one man said the name of a slaughtered buffalo — in this case, *Purkisi* — and another repeated this name; then the first man said '*hau! hau!*' which was repeated by the second man".⁶ Both performances agree in their form, although we noticed that all the ten dancers took part in the recitation, while Rivers found that only two were singing, and in our case we were saluted by the words while the singers at the funeral addressed the buffalo slaughtered for the dead. In each case, single words or short poetical lines are spoken, then partly or in full length repeated, and the *hau-hau* is added twice. In accordance with the song, the dancers move slowly in a circle.

All other pieces were recorded from groups of 6 female (no. 1-3, 4-6) or male (no. 7-8) singers.⁷ Each time, the chorus was divided into two halves who sang alternately. The voices of the singers, particularly when they uttered low tones, emerged from the depth of the throat. According to Rivers, the reason for this practice might be to make the words incomprehensible for listeners.⁸ In spite of this, the lines of a poem contribute much to the formation of the melody, as we observe in those pieces where the first line at least is understandable (no. 1, 4, 6, and perhaps 7). Here we see that the poetical line determines the duration and the metro-rhythmical arrangement of the

basic melodic period, which is repeated almost unaltered up to the end of the piece.

Differences between the single melodies lie first in their metrical organization. The metrical organization results from the disposition of the melody, and this in turn is given by the fact that the melodic line within a period returns — usually more than once — to low tones. From this point of view, we observe metrical units of 2x8 crotchets in no. 1, 2x7 crotchets in no. 7, and 3x8 crotchets in no. 6. More often, we find “asymmetrical” organizations, as 7+6+8+6 crotchets in no. 2, 7+8 crotchets in no. 3, 4+4+8+8 crotchets in no. 4, 5+7+7 crotchets in no. 5, and 2x6+3+5 crotchets in no. 8. A more precise examination of the returns to low tones makes clear that the units of 8 crotchets in no. 1 are divided into 3+5, while the period of song no. 3 consists of 3+4+4+4 instead of 7+8 crotchets. These subdivisions are not marked in the transcription since the melody continues like a wave at the mentioned places. A subdivision into 6+3 crotchets can be observed in the 1st and 3rd metrical unit of song no. 8, provided the unclear pitch around Bb (*ni*) (7th crotchet) can be regarded as a low tone.

The sequence of two-quaver groups with the lower tone as the first suggests a rolling movement from the depth — out of the throat, as it were — to the height. This kind of melodic movement is so stereotyped in the Toda songs that it superimposes on all more delicate details. It may have caused the statement, even of connoisseurs, that the Todas have only one melody which they use for chanting all their poems. Surely this kind of movement is the main feature of Toda melodies; other tribes such as Kotas and Irulars never sing in this manner. A more careful examination of our recording shows, however, that there are considerable differences not only in the metrical organization but also in details of the melodic lines. They become apparent in the transcription. Only two special peculiarities need be mentioned here:

1. The songs of the men (no. 7 and 8) prefer the octave, based on the lowest tone (g) (*Pa*), as the rising interval. From the octave tone (g'), the melody ascends to the third and the fifth above. The songs of women, on the other hand, use the fourth, fifth, or sixth (based on g, a, or b) (*Pa*, *Dha* or *Ni*) as an ascending leap and continue with seconds and thirds from the level of e' or f' (*Ga* or *Ma*) upward. Thus the melodies of men differ in range and structure from those of women.
2. The single melodies do not only have individual shape, but they also use different pitches. Sometimes the pitches are indefinite. In such cases, the intention of the singers may be discovered from the surrounding tones or by comparison with repetitions of the tone in question. Nevertheless, it is obvious that different “modes” are used. Song no. 1, for example, does not include the tones c', d', and

g', (Sa, Re and Pa), but c♯', d♯', and g♯' instead, while song no. 2 has the tones f' (Ma) in descent and f♯' (ma) in ascent, beside of d♯' (ga) and the raised g' (dha). In song no. 4, we hear f♯' (ma) and g' (dha) as well as f' (Ma) and g' (Pa). The men sing the tone b' (Na) in song no. 7, but ' flat (ni) in no. 8. Such an occurrence of another or of more than one half tone derived from one of the seven main tones while the basic tone remains constant (compare songs no. 4 and 5) seems to be a counterpart to a widespread practice in India, as found in local traditions of villages and cultivated to the highest degree in the *raga* systems of the North and the South. Beside such shifts within the scope or sphere of a main tone — not exactly the same as chromatism in Western music — there may be a change of central and final tones too: The songs no. 1 to 4 and 6 have the tone e' (Ga), song no. 5 the tone f' (Ma) as their centre and finalis. In both songs of the men, tone g' (Pa) functions as the centre. The same tone is finalis in no. 8, while no. 7 ends on b' (Ni). Similar changes of central and final tones from one song to the next are found in other musical styles of India as well.

Thus we may conclude that the kind of "modal" structure identifies these songs as "Indian" in the broader sense of the word, while the rolling melodic movement from the depth to the height is the typical feature of Toda chants. This type of singing has never been affected by the music of oboes and drums as played for Toda funerals by Kotas, the artisans of the Nilgiris. And the Kotas, on the other hand, did not imitate the melodies of the Todas at all.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. H.B. Grigg, for instance, wrote in his book, *A Manual of the Nilgiri District in the Madras Presidency*, Madras 1880, p. 91, the following about the Todas: "They have only one musical instrument, a kind of flute, called *Buguri*. It is simply a hollow bamboo with holes at intervals, and is by no means sweet in tone. The singing of the Todas is remarkable for an entire absence of tune. They lean their heads upon their hands, shut their teeth, and make a droning nasal sound which can hardly be dignified even with the name of a chant, and often approaches more nearly a snore. As far as I know, they have no words for these songs, though one is known as wedding song (*snori*). The Toda word is graphic". But see Venkatramier, M. and Raghavan, V., *Toda Music*, *Jl. Mus. Acad.*, Madras, 26.150 ff. 1955.
2. See, W.H.R. Rivers, *The Todas*, London 1906, Reprint: Anthropological Publications Oosterhout N.B., Netherlands, 1967, p. 502-504.
3. See M.B. Emeneau, *Toda Songs*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1971, p. xxxix.
4. According to Mrs. Wiedemann's explanation on song no. 9; see the part "Translations" of the present article.
5. Compare Emeneau, *Toda Songs*, p. xiv-xv. Mrs. Wiedemann (loc. cit.) gives a somewhat different view that *koṇ* means "a couplet that rhymes", and that it is "a classical composition done by one or more Todas for the sole purpose of dancing".
6. See Rivers, *op. cit.* p. 601 and 378. Other occasions for performance of *koṇ* dances are mentioned by Emeneau, *op. cit.*, p. xx-xxiv.

7. Our question whether men and women do ever sing together was denied by the Todas. In his article "Toda Marriage Regulations", *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 39/1937, p. 103-112, M.B. Emeneau notes the following: "Men and women seldom sing together, though it sometimes happens, and more especially in the case of husband and wife. But uwdmorkvae:dvoj and poljo:l of opposite sex are forbidden not only to sing together but even to sing at the same time in one another's hearing. If a man is singing out of sight but within hearing of a woman of these categories and she wishes to burst into the song, she will first ask who is singing and then regulate her actions accordingly; so also if a man hears a woman singing. One can only suppose that if they sing at the same time, they would be considered to be acting as if they were marriageable."
8. See Rivers, *op. cit.* p. 600.

Texts of songs

Regarding the words of the songs 1-3, see the preliminary note to the translation.

Song No. 4 (=No. 3 of Nirkatji)

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 1) kale kudry | kar etkin. |
| 12) en on mu-va | en Ne-ro-shgud |
| | Pongarshigud. |
| (or) | |
| (this line is repeated after each of the following ones) | |
| 2) kale kob | not etkin. |
| 3) poŷy 0o-gyalf | kar etkin. |
| 4) twī ka-rsh twī | nwī-t etkin. |
| 5) par a-rsh fo-rsh | kiy etkin. |
| 6) par poŷy fo-rsh | kiy etkin. |
| 7) narsh mox nwī-ty | pat etkin. |
| 8) narsh īr nwī-ty | pat thashkin. |
| 9) twī-dr fuxu-r | pu-ts thashkin. |
| 10) kar kwī-t sin | īt thashkin. |
| 11) so-k so-fer | pochs thashkin. |
| 12) kwī-ty mu-nu-r | pochs thashkin. |
| 13) puθ forsh karθ | o-ti thashkin. |
| 14) pocashky karst | karsth thashkin. |
| 15) ars mox wa-l | kal etkin. |
| 16) pō-dr mox so-θky | nwī-t etkin. |
| 17) a pō-dr xu-tthk | au etkin. |
| 18) a to-r fosk | fī-x etkin. |

Song No.5 (= No. 4. of Nirkatji)

1) ku·drigude	ōwxo·dr o·īm.
2) ku·drigude	ōwmonigorm.
3) podgude	ars o·dr ma·t.
4) ku·drigude	pō·dr odr ke·lf.
5) podgudeh	twī·dr fuxu·r.
6) iṭ gudeh	karkwī·t sin.
7) o·drigudeh	ko·le o·ṭ.
8) o·drigudeh	koṇe nwī·t.
9) ōsṭ gudeh	puθ koṇ xīs.
10) iṭ gudeh	punō·w xīs.
11) nwī·ti gudeh	kwor fato·θ.
12) nwī·ti gudeh	kaṛ fato·θ.
13) podgudeh	po·ro·θ tūlym.
14)=13)	
15) podgudeh	no·dr aryorshy.
16) podgudeh	tō·w aryorshy.

Song No.6 (= No.5. of Nirkatji)

1) pa·we xwe·ṭ ūrpoθ	so·ro·y futy udth o·xayi
2) parshōf faṛ piyaθ	miṭa·i θe·ṭth o·xayi.
3) kwī·ṭi·ṣ ars podfo·y īdrths	oc narsh fonm kwīdrth o·gayi.
4) no·tiṣṭo·r podfo·y īdrths	kof naṣ īr idth o·gayi.
5) arso·dr mo·t o·difo·y īdrths	so·ro·y futy udth o·gayi.
6) pō·dro·dr ke·lf o·difo·y īdrths	miṭa·i θe·ṭth o·gayi.
7) ōwxo·dr o·īm ku·driroy īdrths	oc narsh fonm kwīdrth o·gayi.
8) ōw monigorm podro·y īdrths	kof naṣ īr idth o·gayi.
9) sinaθ mock īθfo·y īdrths	oc narsh fonm kwīdrth o·gayi.
10) koseθil arc̣riyi īdrths	kof naṣ īr idth o·gayi.

Song No. 7 (= No.2. of Nirkatji)

{ 1) pa-we xwe-t	úrpon pat.
{ 2) parshof far	pīnen fat.
{ 3) ōw mod b-īm	ku-drixudich
{ 4) ōw xo-dr ma-nen	ku-drixudich.
{ 5) tōw o-s elm	"
{ 6) no-dro-s elm	"
{ 7) apōdr xu-dthk	"
{ 8) a to-r fosk	"
{ 9) mo-to twīdr	podgudeh.
{ 10) tōwe fadr	ku-drigudeh.
{ 11) sogoθyxō-rn	podgudeh.
{ 12) okorsh iṛ	podgudeh.
{ 13) kwīdrxu-dryat	piyigudeh.
{ 14) o-r xu-dryat	nadrthgudeh.
{ 15) puθ nōw xīs	enhiīm podea.
{ 16) puθ koṇ xīs	enhiīm podea.
{ 17) kin mox θa-rsh	" "
{ 18) kin gwadr tarsh	" "
{ 19) kafoṭ xo-rn	" "
{ 20) kafanody	" "
{ 21) twī-dr fuxu-r	ud o-t o-da.
{ 22) kar kwī-t sin	ud nwī-t nwī-ta.
{ 23) mu-nōrk o-ṭ	chitix o-da.
{ 24) mu-narsh iṛ	chitix nwī-ta.
{ 25) kwīge ro-j	i xōmo-rsh.
{ 26) malle ro-j	nwī-teh it vora.
{ 27) kō-r at	" "
{ 28) kō-rbeṭ atk	" "
{ 29) somudr of	" "
{ 30) pet nel koy	" "
{ 31) no-xo-f	o-deh it vora.
{ 32) no-k ac xwe-ṭ	ūrpce vora.

Song No.8 (= No.6 of Nirkatji)

{ 1) i xo-seθa	ir xo-seθa.
{ 2) mocadfanya	moxwīdr θeskyā.
{ 3) en boc oṇa	uṭyo-θ uṭya.
{ 4) eno-dr fe-θya	pe-θoθ perpya.
{ 5) mad abak	eḍ θidthy oṇa.
{ 6) mīdr xo-to-s	eḍ xo-ty oṇa.
{ 7) pūdyē fit	eḍ en oṇa.
{ 8) pīte fūdyā	eḍ xīs oṇa.
{ 9) kwaṭe-nīrshka	pīxu it öd.
{ 10) sin moṇygo-rn	ōstu it öd.
{ 11) oṭy θe-lu-r	pīxu it öd.
{ 12) o-r xarx	pīxu it öd.
{ 13) mode no-ym	xu-tyxularch it öd.
{ 14) mode xīs	ankixularch it öd.
15 + 16) = 5+6)	
{ 17) teṛk ud īr	e-txula-rch oṇa.
{ 18) kwadeh ud mox	e-txula-rch oṇa.
19 + 20) = 7+8)	
{ 21) ka-rsh θo-r	koy xu-ty xīs.
{ 22) koyno-dr θo-r	kōlsen xīs
23 + 24) patā it eḍ	en boc oṇa

Song No.9 (No. 1 of Nirkatji)

{ 1) kwlge ro-j	poden id.
{ 2) malle ro-j	nwĩ·tnen id.
{ 3) tōwpotoṇm	poden id.
{ 4) te-fu-r	nwĩ·tnen id.
{ 5) kwa-ymūtu-r	poden id.
{ 6) nelfaly kwōṭ	nwĩ·tnen id.
{ 7) ka-r muṭ ṭōw	poden id.
{ 8) peṭe so-ṭik	nwĩ·tnen id.
{ 9) kupa-rsh	poden id.
{ 10) mu-ṭro	nwĩ·tnen id.
{ 11) o-starsh	poden id.
{ 12) o-rxwĩ-dr	nwĩ·tnen id.
{ 13) i-ṣkyty	poden id.
{ 14) ka-rsh ṭo-r	nwĩ·tnen id.
{ 15) po-rshek	poden id.
{ 16) no-rsh ṭo-r	nwĩ·tnen id.
{ 17) te-va-x(eh)	poden id.
{ 18) kafoṭxo-rn	nwĩ·tnen id.
{ 19) nalkene-rsh	poden id.
{ 20) paca-rṭoḍ	nwĩ·tnen id.
{ 21) picxōdr	poden id.
{ 22) kwodr renthol	nwĩ·tnen id.
{ 23) o-txa-rx	poden id.
{ 24) iso xo-rn	nwĩ·tnen id.
{ 25) pi-ṣō	poden id.
{ 26) pe-ṇto-r	nwĩ·tnen id.
{ 27) na-rshnīrsh	poden id.
{ 28) na-rsh ṭo-r	nwĩ·tnen id.
{ 29) no-drō-z elm	poden id.
{ 30) tōwro-z elm	nwĩ·tnen id.
{ 31) ī kōmo-rsh	ī kōmo-rsh.
{ 32) ṭōtohe	ōno he

Translation

Preliminary note to songs no. 1 to 3 :

These poems were written down in Tamil script by a friend of Sri Muthicane (Member of the State Tribal Advisory Council at Kandamandu, Ootacamund). The entire record is not given here. Dr. B.C. Deva assisted by Sri Muthicane, prepared, on the spot, a translation into English which reads as follows :

Song no. 1 (=no. 1 of Ootacamund)

All words are composed extempore. Each line was repeated by the other (second) half of the chorus. Meaning: "You visitors have come all the way. Let the Gods bless you."

1. *You have come to this mandu (settlement).*
2. *You have seen our temple.*
3. *You have seen the arch of the temple.*
4. *You have seen the two pillars of the temple.*
5. *You have come to see its truth.*
6. *You have come to see the worship.*
7. *You have seen the border (design) of our shawl.*
8. *You come to see the earrings.*
9. *You have asked us to sing — the tune and the word.*
10. *You have seen the arch of the house.*
11. *You have seen the beautiful teeth.*

Song no. 2 (=no. 2 of Ootacamund)

Addressed to the omnipotent Goddess, To.kisy (Teikirzi) — with respect to us, the visitors.

1. *Let us sing this tune.*
2. *Let us clap hands.*
3. *They have come from the plains.*
4. *They have come to see the hills.*
5. *They have come from Coimbatore.*
6. *They have come from the city.*
7. *They have come from Coonoor.*
8. *They have come from Coonoor bazar.*
9. *They have come to the temple.*
10. *They have seen the truth.*
11. *They come to see a foreign place.*
12. *They come to know an unknown place.*

Song no. 3 (=no. 3 of Ootacamund) Marriage song.

1. *We like only this girl, let us get her.*
2. *The buffalo I give as dowry.*
3. *I give the buffalo and the girl.*
4. *We come to ask for the girl, to meet the brides parents.*
5. *Let the village elders meet and the expenses be given.*
6. *Let the bride's people keep to their word.*
7. *Let the outsiders be honoured, let them bring the bride.*
8. *They have taken the money and brought the girl.*
9. *We went to the pancayat.*
10. *The pancayat have decided.*
11. *The pancayat have given a fair judgement.*

Preliminary note to the songs no. 4 to 9 :

There was not time enough to write down the whole poems on the spot. Fortunately Mrs. Wiedemann, the wife of a German who was working at the time of our journey with the Indo-German Nilgiri Development Project, was kind enough to transcribe the words from the tape and to translate them into English. As Mrs. Wiedemann mentioned in a letter that the singers had partly to be consulted again because the songs were consciously sung and so unclear that even the Todas could hardly perceive the words.

Mrs. Wiedemann's transcription follows Emeneau's phonetic spelling which is maintained in printing. Her explanations to each song are given here with the translation.

Song no. 4 (=no. 3 of Nirkāṭji)

A famous Toda by the name of Peticane died young in 1966 leaving a young and only son five years old. The boy's mother's sister by the name of Luxam sang this song consoling the young boy, Ne.ro.shgud.

There are certain things in which a Toda father has to educate his son in. The meaning of the song is that although your father is no more, I will take the responsibility of seeing you through your boyhood into manhood. The song was composed and sung by Luxam to No.ro.shgud.

The day of this particular recording, a few other women including the boy's mother have joined Luxam in singing this. And they have added the name of another boy to rhyme with No. ro.shgud, viz. Pongarshidgud.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Stone temple | <i>I'll make you build.</i> |
| (This line is repeated after every line) | |
| 2. Entrance posts of stone | <i>I'll make you erect.</i> |
| 3. (At) the temple of o.syal ^f | <i>I'll make you milk (or be priest).</i> |
| 4. The sacred buffalo pen of Karsh | <i>I'll make you watch.</i> |
| 5. Things and house for it | <i>I'll make you make.</i> |
| 6. Things for temple (sacred dairy) | <i>I'll make you make.</i> |
| 7. Beautiful girl I'll look | <i>and make you hold (marry),</i> |
| 8. Beautiful buffalo I'll look | <i>and make you catch.</i> |
| 9. Beautiful embroidered robe | <i>I'll make you cover (wear).</i> |
| 10. Beautiful gold earrings of horn shape | <i>I'll make you wear.</i> |
| 11. Thousand coins (money) | <i>I'll make you earn.</i> |
| 12. Crores of three hundred | <i>I'll make you earn</i> |
| 13. Fresh milk milked | <i>I'll make you drink.</i> |
| 14. Fried millet mixed (a delicacy for Todas) | <i>I'll make you eat.</i> |
| 15. The books of the Westerners | <i>I'll make you learn.</i> |
| 16. The ways of other Indians | <i>I'll make you see.</i> |
| 17. Large gatherings | <i>I'll make you attend.</i> |
| 18. Large meetings | <i>I'll make you go.</i> |

Song no. 5 (=no. 4 of Nīrkātji)

This is a song (now) sung by Luxam and other women, almost in the same style as song no. 7 (=no. 2 of Nīrkātji), and carrying the same meaning.

1. & 2. *Gathered are seven* (always means all or many) *groups of people and all their important men.*
3. *Come is the Westerner (the White man).*
4. *Gathered are the Indians (non tribes).*
5. *Have come to beautiful embroidered robe.*
6. *Have worn beautiful earrings of gold.*
7. *Have danced the dance of the feet.*
8. *Have rolled or moved the look of the eyes.* (denoting that every one is dancing with joy so that even the eyes speak).
9. *Have said the new rhymes* (poetry, couplet).
10. *Have sung the new (-ly made) song.*
11. *Have seen (to it that) nothing is lacking.*
12. *Have seen (to it that) no mistakes are made.*
13. & 14. *Has come happiness which rarely comes.*
15. *Have come not knowing sacred lands.*
16. *Have come not knowing the Gods.*

Song No. 6 (=no. 5 of Nīrkātji)

It was sung by Luxam, her sister, Sagsam and other women on the

occasion of a gathering of people to greet a visitor. They sing and say that people should not drink and misbehave on such occasions. Usually, where there is a gathering like this, the liquor-sellers come to tempt people.

- 1.&2. *Where there is music with musical instruments and drums, bottles of liquor (so.ro.y, the local brew) should not be drunk.*
- 3.&4. *Where the White man (Westerner) has come, coins (money for liquor) should not be given. Where important people have come, money should not be spent (for liquor). (Explanation: kof nar ir is the name of a buffalo used for money or coins in songs to rhyme with oc narsh fonm.)*
- 5.&6. *Where the language of the Westerner and the customs of the Indian are going to mix, liquor bottles should not be consumed.*
- 7.&8. *(Same as verses 3 and 4, except "White man" and "important men" which are replaced by "all men" and "all leaders".)*
- 9.&10. *Where people have gathered with one purpose, sitting on one seat, money should not be spent for liquor.*

Song no. 7 (=no. 2 of Nirkatji)

This is a song or *now* in Toda. The piece is sung by men in two groups. It speaks about the visitor who has come from beyond the mountains and the singers are inviting the various people to gather and to make merry. Each subject they sing about has two sets of words. The first group mentions the first set; it is followed by the second group mentioning the second rhyme with the same meaning. (Thus chorus I sings the lines 1, 3, 5, etc., chorus II the lines 2, 4, 6, etc. Here, 'chorus' means half of the whole group of singers.)

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Tube instruments made of Banana tree</i> | <i>touch and play.</i> |
| 2. <i>Drum of jack tree</i> | <i>touch and beat.</i> |
| 3. <i>Seven (means all) village people</i> | <i>gathered.</i> |
| 4. <i>Seven branches of Badagas</i> | <i>gathered.</i> |
| 5. <i>Sacred places all</i> | <i>gathered.</i> |
| 6. <i>Lands all</i> | <i>gathered.</i> |
| 7.&8. (Rhymes which mean that people have gathered in a big crowd.) | |
| 9. <i>The people of Tarthar</i> | <i>have come.</i> |
| 10. <i>The people of Towuly</i> | <i>have gathered.</i> |
| 11. <i>Close friends</i> | <i>have come.</i> |
| 12. <i>(like) Two buffaloes that feed the same calf</i> | <i>have come.</i> |
| 13. <i>Many paths</i> | <i>leading to the same place.</i> |
| 14. <i>Several streams</i> | <i>have come to the same place.</i> |
| 15. <i>New song made</i> | <i>merry (happy) we feel.</i> |
| 16. <i>New rhymes made</i> | <i>enthusiasm we feel.</i> |
| 17. <i>Young boys</i> | <i>enthusiasm we feel.</i> |
| 18. <i>Young girls</i> | <i>enthusiasm we feel.</i> |

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 19. <i>Clever man</i> | <i>enthusiasm we feel.</i> |
| 20. (as no. 19; both lines mean a man who is good in discussions, arguments etc. in council.) | |
| 21. <i>Embroidered robes</i> | <i>dance few steps.</i> |
| 22. <i>Gold earrings of horn shape</i> | <i>have a look.</i> |
| 23. <i>The man who leads</i> | <i>dance a little.</i> |
| 24. <i>The buffalo who leads</i> | <i>have a look.</i> |
| 25. <i>Man from plains</i> | <i>this sacred buffalo.</i> |
| 26. <i>Mountain region (Nilgiris)</i> | <i>see (visit).</i> |
| 27. <i>Waters beyond</i> | <i>see (visit)</i> |
| 28. <i>Mountains beyond the water</i> | <i>see (visit).</i> |
| 29. <i>Sea (Ocean)</i> | <i>see (visit)</i> |
| 30. <i>Fruit of cane</i> | <i>see (visit).</i> |
| 31. <i>(Like) hooded cobra</i> | <i>dance and come.</i> |
| 32. <i>A tubular instrument</i> | <i>play and come.</i> |

(Note: The Todas are not sure what the lines 27 to 30 denote, but certainly the waters, mountains beyond Nilgiris. Note that they mention instruments).

Song no. 8 (=no. 6 of Nīrkātji)

About a 100 years ago, a Toda by the name of Nornirsh committed suicide by consuming opium. He belonged to the To,ro.dr clan.

The reason for suicide was that his wife was carried away by a man of the Ka.rsh clan. His name was Parxwirsh, and the woman's name was Kocer. This song is a lament sung by his younger brother Midbi.y. The lament has been handed down from generation to generation. Part of it is repeated here for recording.

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Oh Kashethy!</i> | <i>Buffalo Kashethy!</i> |
| (The dead man is addressed as a buffalo.) | |
| 2. (gives only <i>kwarsm</i> , i.e. song names for buffaloes of To,ro.dr clan.) | |
| 3. <i>My elder brother</i> | <i>of rare birth.</i> |
| 4. <i>One born with me</i> | <i>of rare birth.</i> |
| 5. <i>Poison opium</i> | <i>why ate elder brother?</i> |
| 6. <i>Throat noose</i> | <i>why tied brother?</i> |
| 7. <i>Sense (you) lost</i> | <i>why my brother?</i> |
| 8. <i>Foolish (you) became</i> | <i>why did you, brother?</i> |
| 9. <i>Ki.yudr village (where headman stays)</i> | <i>let us go rise up.</i> |
| 10. <i>Headman (of Todas)</i> | <i>well tell, rise up.</i> |
| 11.&12. <i>To Badaga village Shoker and other villages let us go</i> | |
| (and tell the people) | <i>rise up.</i> |

- 13.&14. (Toda) village councils *gather, (let us) rise.*
 (Both lines mean the same: Let us gather all the Todas from all villages and report.)
- 15.&16. (Repetition of lines 5&6)
17. *I have got a buffalo* *to pay compensation.*
18. *I have chosen a girl* *to marry.*
 (Meaning: The loss of one woman does not matter; we can get a better one.)
- 19&20. (Repetition of lines 7&8)
- 21.&22. *The people of Ka.rsh clan we'll bring with hand cuffs and leg chains.*
- 23.&24. *Catch (then), rise up,* *my elder brother.*

Song no. 9 (=no. 1 of Nīrkātji)

This type of song is called *koṇ* by the Todas. It is a "classical" composition done by one or more Todas for the sole purpose of dancing. It is more of a chant than a song, as Emeneau calls it. Literally translated, a *koṇ* would mean a couplet that rhymes, e.g.:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (1) <i>Kwīge ro.j</i> | — <i>Malle ro.j</i> |
| <i>The plains</i> | <i>The mountains</i> |
| (2) <i>Ter. ud. o.k</i> | — <i>Mox ud o. k</i> |
| <i>Fine (to) one man</i> | <i>Girl (wife to) one man</i> |

In practice, *koṇ* means words composed for a dance which is always by men. A group of Toda men, dancing always in a circle, is divided into four groups:

1. The composer or composers standing next to each other.
2. The group which repeats the last part of the composition.
- 3&4. The groups which shout "hau, hau" one after the other to keep the rhythm of the chant to help the foot work.

The example mentioned above is performed by the group as follows: The composer breaks the first line of this *koṇ*, i.e. *kwīge ro.j* into three syllables to keep up the tone of the chant and says: *kwī—ge—ro.j*. The second group repeats *e-ro.j*. The third and fourth shout *hau-hau. hau-hau*. This particular *koṇ* was recorded by Manicane of the No.s (Norsh. clan.)

The *koṇ* is about the visitor who has come from the plains (not the Nilgiri hills) to visit the Todas, their villages and sacred places, and temples. They honour the visitor by giving him the name of a sacred buffalo, viz., Komo.s (Keenmorsh), and say that they want to sing and speak his praises.

It is presumed that the visitor is not a man from the Nilgiris, but has come from the plains. His journey is traced from Madras, via Coimbatore and Karamadai where there is an important Hindu temple which the Todas often visit. They mention certain mountains and rivers which are important land marks to the Todas. Each one of these places has two names which rhyme (or two *kon* words).

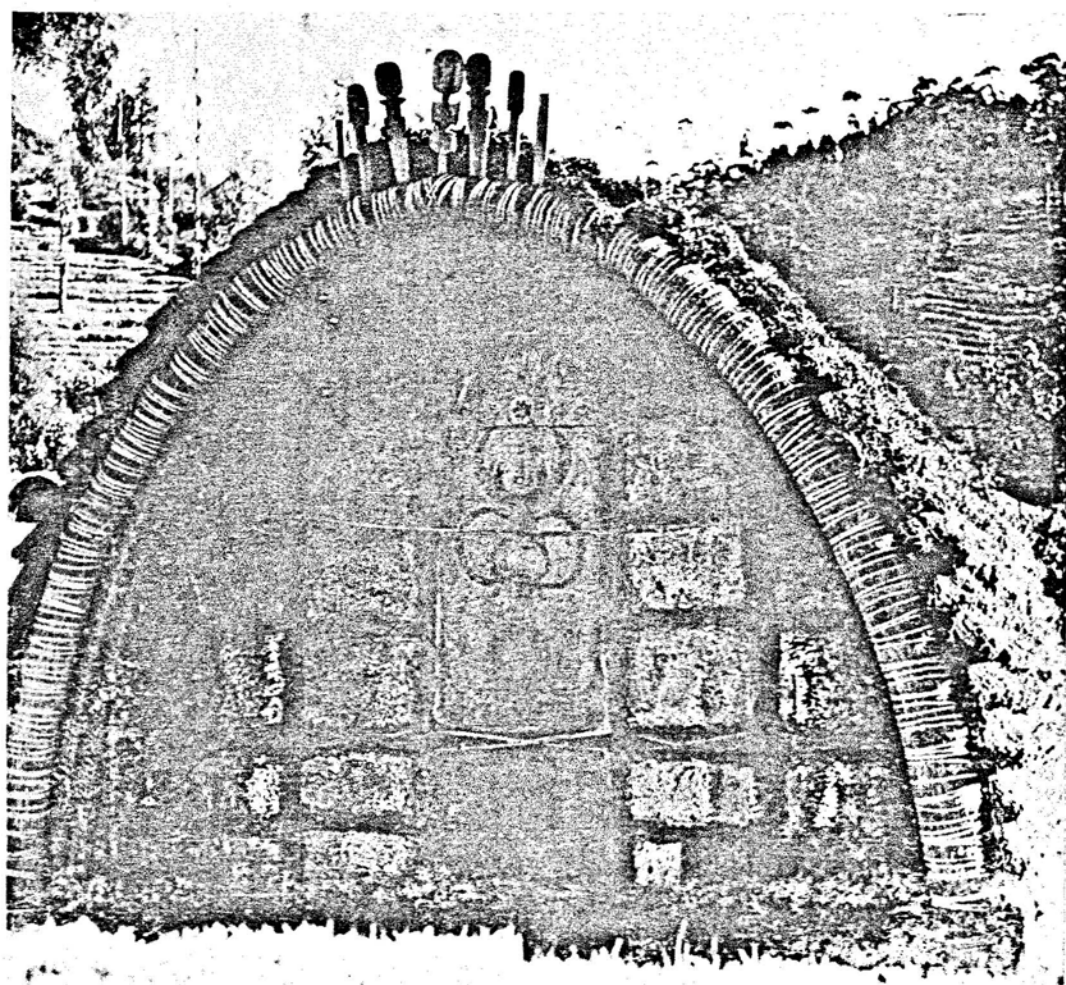
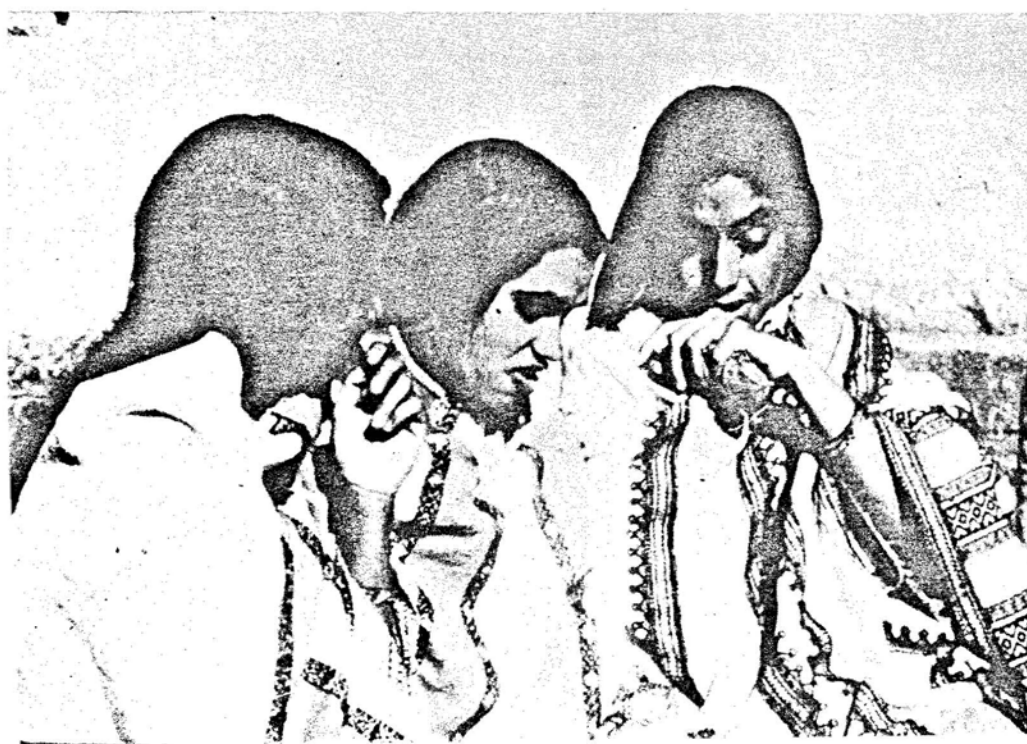
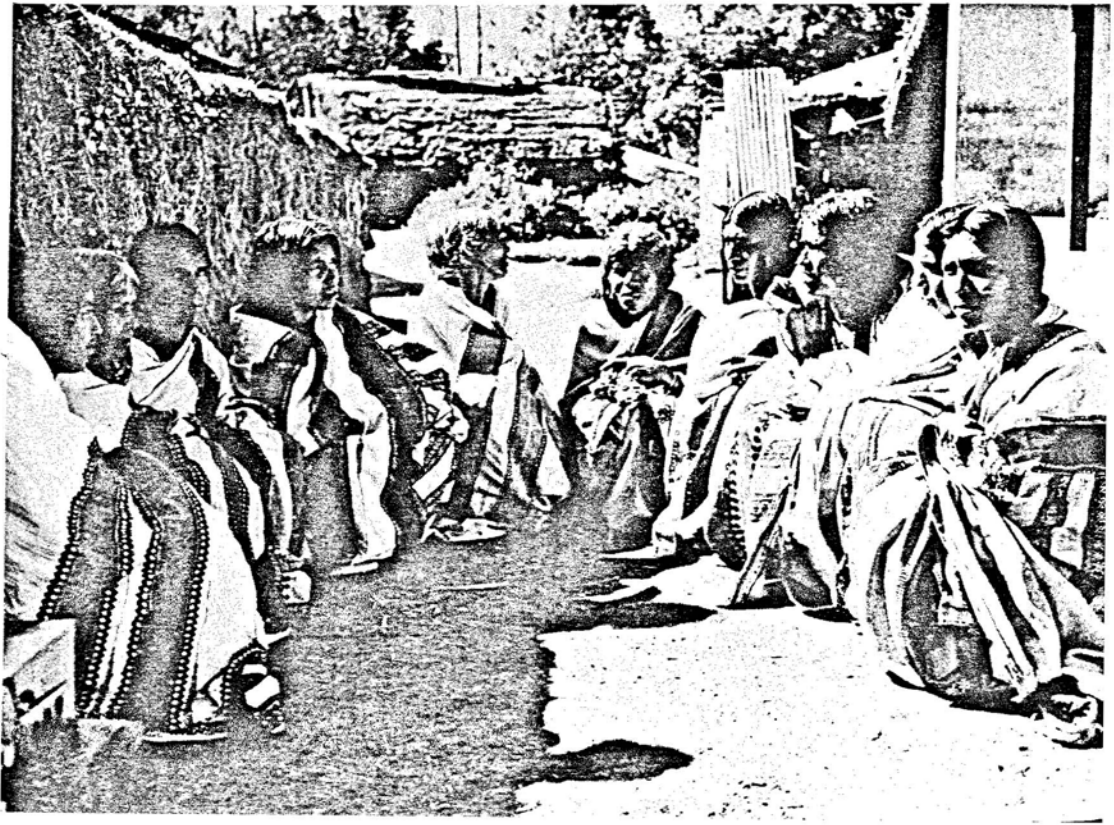




Fig. 2: Men singers at Nirkatji (Nirkasi) *mandu*.

Fig. 3: Women singers at Nirkatji (Nirkasi) *mandu*.





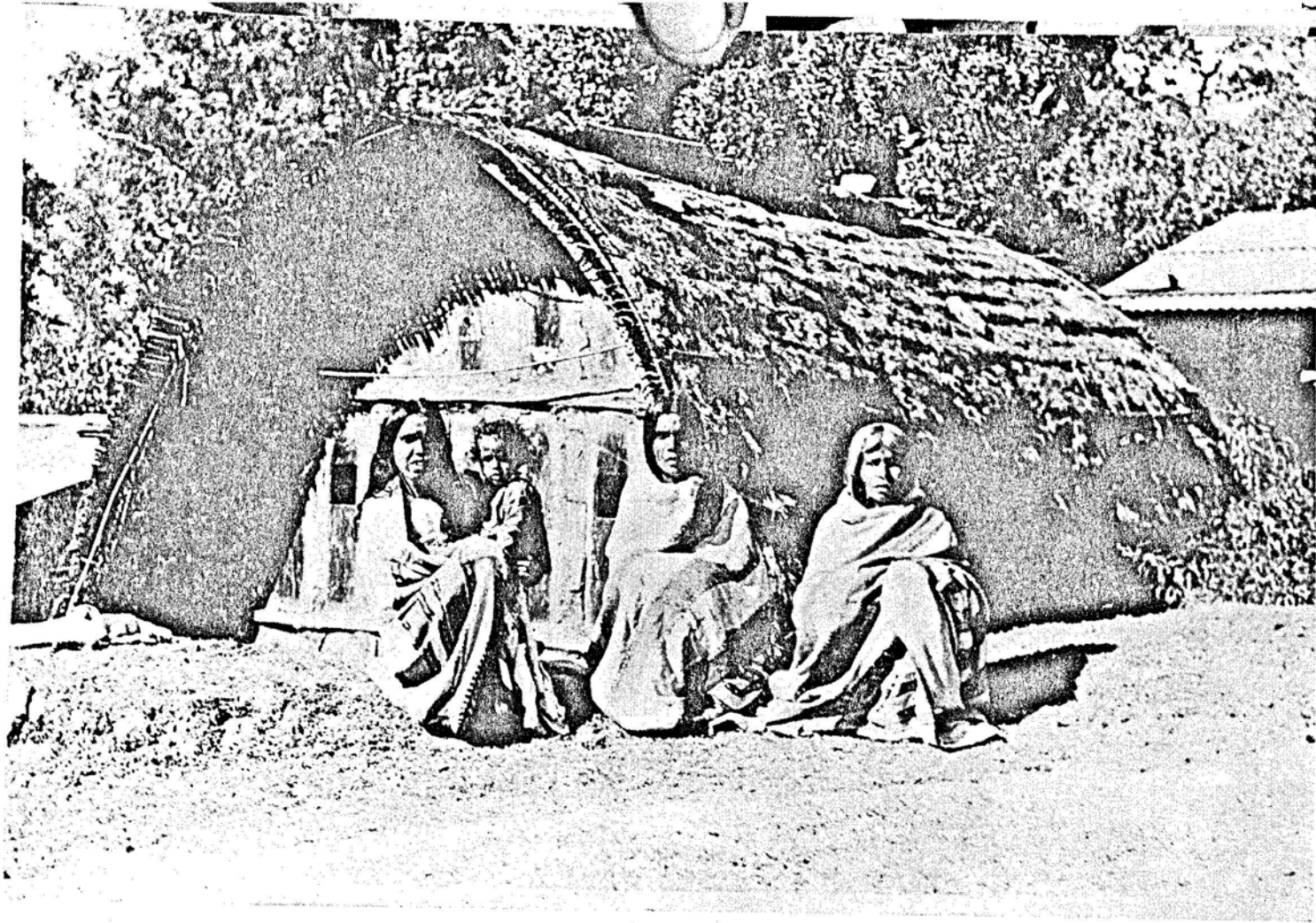


Fig. 5: The residential hut (*arsh*) of the Todas.

In the land of the Todas, they mention the names of the various villages and the clan people who have come to honour the visitor as well as the various places which the visitor has seen. The buffalo name is given in the last but one line.

1. (From) the land of the plains has come today.
2. (To) the mountainous region to see today.
3. From Madras come today.
4. Madras seen today.,
5. From Coimbatore come today.
6. Coimbatore seen today.
- 7&8. Karamadai (comp. the introduction)
(The second part of the lines, i.e. "come today" and "seen today" are sung alternately up to line 28.)
- 9.&10. (Two *kor* names for a hill near Ootacamund)
- 11.&12. (According to Emeneau, *Toda Songs* p. 982, names of the Todas settlement of the Ka.s clan, now the area of the High Court at Ooty.)
(End of the 1st part mentioning places seen by the visitor. Names of Toda villages and clans follow:)
13. The village Ka.rsh...
14. The people of Ka.rsh clan...
15. The village No.rsh...
16. The people of No.rsh...
17. The head-village of the Piedr clan...
18. The people of the Piedr clan...
19. The village Omga.rsh...
20. The people of Omga.rsh clan...
21. The village Martxodr...
22. The people of the Xodr clan...
23. The village Ki. widr...
24. The people of the Ki.widr clan...
25. The village Pan...
26. The people of the Pan clan...
27. The village Melgarsh...
28. The people of the Melgarsh clan...
29. (The people) of all places (lands) you have visited.
30. All sacred places you have seen.
31. (To) this buffalo Komo.s (see explanation above)
32. Let us speak let us say.

DR. B. C. DEVA, is Assistant Secretary (Music) at the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi.

DR. J. KUCKERTZ, Professor for Eastern and Oriental Music, Institute of Ethnomusicology, University of Koln, West Germany.

तौड़ा गान

उदक मंडल

स्वागत गान ।

पहला वृंद

1. लय = 134

पगरेमस मूस पगरेप गपगप । पग रेगस पूस पगरेपगडः । दूसरा वृंद इतिवत्
(ह) न श न श पो लो मई ता

2. लय = 142

पहला वृंद

तोक्शी देवी के बारे में

छरे छम ग गप गपमप ग निग गपमप गप ग ग छरे छग छम ग गप गपमप ॥
पास कोस इरुपु पाट
निग गप मप गप गडः ॥ दूसरा वृंद इतिवत्

3 लय = 138-144

पहला वृंद

विवाह गान

छरे निम म निरे निप गडः पा छरे छरे निम गम निरे निप ग ॥
कु कि शतुवार्ता तुक्कु
दूसरा वृंद इतिवत्

नीर्काशि मांडू

4. लय = 160

लोरी पहला वृंद

छस निरे निम गम । गध मध छु छ म निरे छस निरे निम गम गप गम गम ।
का ले कु द्रो करसत किन् (आ) रन् ओण मु वा
निरे छस निरे निम गम गप गम ग ॥ दूसरा वृंद इतिवत्
रन् ने रो व युड (आ)

5. लय = 144-148

पहला वृंद

अतिथि को नमस्कार

छस मध पध मप गम । छस छरे रे रे रे मध मप रेग छस छरे रे रे रे मध मडः ॥
कु द्रो गु दे ओक्सेद्र ओत्
दूसरा वृंद इतिवत्

6 लय - 160 पहला वृंद सभा के चेतावनी
 पुं पुं पुं गं पुं पुं नि धि नि पुं नि पुं नि । पुं पुं पुं गं पुं पुं पुं पुं पुं गं पुं पुं
 पा वे क्शे त उर पा त सो रा य फू ती
 पुं पुं पुं गं पुं पुं गं पुं पुं गं २ । दूसरा वृंद इतिवत्
 उरत ओ क्शे यी

7 लय - 176 पहला वृंद अतिथि के नमस्कार
 पुं पुं पुं पुं नि नि नि नि नि नि नि नि । पुं पुं पुं पुं पुं नि नि नि नि नि नि नि नि ।
 पा वे क्शे त (आ) उर ये न् पा न्
 दूसरा वृंद इतिवत्

8 लय - 176 पहला वृंद नृत्य गीत
 पुं पुं पुं पुं नि नि नि नि नि नि नि नि । पुं पुं पुं पुं पुं नि नि नि नि नि नि नि नि ।
 सा हि त्य (मातु) अस्पष्ट इर क्शे स वा
 पुं पुं पुं पुं नि नि नि नि नि नि नि नि । पुं पुं पुं पुं पुं नि नि नि नि नि नि नि नि ।
 मा चोड फन् या
 दूसरा वृंद इतिवत्

9 लय - 176 नृत्यानुग गीति (कोण) अतिथि के नमस्कार
 म् म् म् ? म् म् म् म् म् ।
 म् म् गरोज् , म् म् गरोज् , हो हो , हो हो
 1 2 3 4
 म् म् म् ? म् म् म् म् म् ।
 म् म् गरोज् , म् म् गरोज् , हो हो , हो हो
 1 2 3 4

1 :- अकेला गायक 2, 3, 4 :- अलग, अलग वृंद

Songs of the Todas

(in the same order as the poems and translations)

Recordings of Ootacamund

J = 134 chorus I (1st half of the group) *chorus II* (2nd half of the group) Salutation of the visitors

1 tone lower (i-ho - -) nars' nars - - - po-#e- mai (i-ta - - -) (etc., alternately up to the end....)

J = 142 chorus I (1/2) 7! 6! 8! 6! To Goddess Tō-kisy

rding 1 1/2 tone lower pāyēkois iruppupart

chorus II (1/2) 7! 6! 8! 6! etc..

J = 138-144 chorus I 7! 8! chorus II 7! 8! Marriage song

rding 1 tone lower kukištuvārt āytukku. etc.

Recordings of Nirkātji

J = 160 chorus I 4! 4! 8! 8! "Lullaby"

as recorded ka-le hū-dry kar et-kin (a) en on mu-va en Ne-rosh-gud (a) etc..

J = 144-148 chorus I 5! 7! 7! Salutation of the visitors

as recorded ku-dri-gu-do? bnxo-dr o-tm etc...

J = 160 chorus I 8/4 To warn the assembly

rding 1/2 tone lower pa-we xwe-t ūr-poθ so-ro-y fu-ty. uddh o-xayi etc...

J = 176 chorus I 7/4 Salutation of the visitors

8 men less than 1/4 tone lower pa-we xwe-t (a - - -) ūr-pen pat (a - - -) etc... chorus II as I

J = 176 chorus I 6+3! 5! 6+3! 5! Dirge chorus II as I

8 men 1/2 tone higher ?... ? ūr xo-se-θa ?... mo-cod-fan-ya etc.

kon-chant to the dance of the men at Nirkātji - for Salutation of the visitors.

J = 176 1. 2. 3. 4. 1. 2. 3. 4. The numerals indicate:

as recorded kūi-go-roj, ē-roj, hau hau, hau hau / mal-le-roj, ē-roj, hau hau, hau hau / etc...

1. soloist who composes the words extempore.
2. group repeating the preceding two syllables.
3.+4. the two groups who shout 'hau hau'.