Ancient Hindu Refugees

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Badaga Social History 1550-1975

PAUL HOCKINGS

University of Illinois, Chicago

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For M.N. SRINIVAS

Men that undertake only one district are much more likely to advance natural knowledge than those who grasp at more than they can possibly be acquainted with; every kingdom, every province should have its own monographer.

GILBERT WHITE
The Natural History of Selborne

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University of Illinois, Chicago PAUL HOCKINGS
January, 1979

Introduction

Documentation of Badaga culture spans a period from 1800 to the present, one-and-three-quarter centuries of changing conditions described by several dozen Western observers, none of them trained anthropologists. The Badagas of modern times are also observers, sometimes very astute ones, of their own changing culture; but they too know little about the way of life pursued by their ancestors before 1800.

In the present work I have tried to answer certain questions about change in this South Indian community, drawing on three sources of data: namely what modern Badagas believe about their society, what outside observers have written, and what I have myself seen and heard while living among the Badagas during the past sixteen years. It must be stressed that these sources are distinct and cannot be expected to yield precisely the same conclusions; in part therefore the answers to my questions may vary depending on the source of the evidence.[1]

Structural-functional anthropology is ill-equipped to explain cultural, or for that matter social change. In 1926 Malinowski (p. 132) stated that functional theory 'aims at the explanation of anthropological facts at all levels of development by the part which they play within the integral system of culture, by the manner in which they are related to each other within the system, and by the manner in which this system is related to the physical surroundings.' But what if an anthropological 'fact', such as the conversion of some members of the community to Christianity.

does not appear to play any part whatsoever in the integral system of the culture and bears no clear relationship to those other 'facts' which are integral to that culture? How did the Badaga millenarian movement of the 1860s, for instance, contribute to the integration of their culture?—the Badagas got the idea that a god was coming to them to consume the German missionary and perform the miracles of Jesus Christ. He did not come, the sick were not cured, and they were extremely dejected. Yet, important though it then seemed to Badagas, this cult movement neither perceptibly integrated their society nor as it happened disintegrated it; nor did it persist. What then was its function, and how do we explain the movement in structural-functional terms? In fact these and other aspects of cultural change during the period we are to examine cannot be adequately explained by reference to universal hypotheses about the working of society. Instead we must attempt to show how the local problems of the Badagas have given rise to local changes, local compromises, explanations and solutions, all of which have been worked out by the Badagas in their own terms of reference, to suit their special needs. Cultural changes have perhaps been induced by outsiders, but not introduced; the Badagas themselves were responsible for modifications in their way of life since their first contact with aliens.

Only when we have determined the nature of cultural change among Badagas and have essayed some explanation for it will we be ready to make any comparisons with the way other societies have operated and changed. We cannot and should not try to explain their specific case by introducing some extraneous model of society, be it structural-functional or evolutionary, and expecting it to fit the Badaga facts in such a way as to explain them. The present study is therefore a contribution to the ethnography and history of a well-known Indian region rather than an essay in comparative sociology.

The Badagas are clearly aware of how they differ from other communities in this region. Thus only people of their community have Baḍagu as their mother-tongue; only Badaga men and women wear the distinctive dress and carry a characteristic mark on the forehead; only Badagas live in their recognized villages which bear distinctively Badaga place-names; and only Badagas can marry Badaga women and thus belong in a widespread network of kin. As the community is a grouping where potential membership is the same as actual membership, no problem arises in practice

over who is a Badaga and who is not.

The coherence of Badaga society was already a *fait accompli* by 1800, and we know of scarcely any villages founded much after that date. In effect their colonization of the Nilgiris and the consolidation of various refugee groups into a unity were events of what we must academically call prehistory. From the Badagas' point of view, however, the advent of a few foreign literati did not nudge their community from the darkness of prehistory into the gloomy light of historicity. Until today nobody, Badaga or otherwise, has published a history of the community: are they therefore still prehistoric?

Be that as it may, their past is of extreme importance to them, and is still vividly recalled in an oral history of legends that are taken for fact and in most cases probably *are* based on actual events. Badaga legends are highly consistent from one part of the district to another and are sufficiently precise about the more insignificant details to convince me that, like the Maori genealogists of old, Badagas have long maintained a fairly accurate interest in their past and in teaching the young about it. Some of these unwritten legends take the form of epic ballads that are sung throughout the night while waiting for someone to die and in other situations where time has to be killed. This should not deceive us into considering the legends mere entertainment: it is true that they are delightfully entertaining to Badagas, but legends are also crucial to their convictions about how the social system should operate. It is these highly credible tales about who settled which village that explain to all the 120,000 Badagas the regulations governing village exogamy and other aspects of the relation between a kinship system, a pattern of settlement and a social hierarchy.

Instead of relegating Badaga legend to the 'folklore' pigeon-hole in the hope that a content analysis will later be made of it, I propose to examine briefly what the legends do and do not cover in Badaga prehistory. Most of them are tales of supposed events, often mysterious, often tragic, events in the lives of personages who lived on the Nilgiri Hills. Stories of love and magic belong to this group. A second group are the political tales, legends of chieftains and East India Company officials who came to the hills for conquest, plunder or sport. A third group are the local legends of Badaga colonization. These three groups deal with varying aspects of Badaga origins. The tales of personal exploits, often amorous in

nature, are cited to explain the beginning of particular lineages or villages. The political tales explain the origin of villages and the emergence of various village officials. The accounts of who settled which place now explain the pattern of exogamy within the community. A fourth group of legends embrace all sorts of events and arrangements resulting from Badagas' contact with the Toda, Kota and Kurumba tribes indigenous to the area. These legends validate the whole system of economic interdependence which has held these groups rigidly together for so long and has led to a minimum division of labour within the Badaga community.

Here are the quasi-historical events Badagas have chosen to remember. Yet the one great event of their past not clearly recalled now is the actual flight from Mysore. They are explicit that their ancestors did not all come to the Nilgiris at the same time, and yet many nowadays claim they had been refugees fleeing from Tippu Sultan. So vague are people about their ancestors' flight that the only legend I have located on the subject is obviously coloured by a nineteenth-century borrowing from the Book of Exodus. It tells how the Badagas, hotly pursued by Moslem soldiers, came to the Moyar River, the northern limit of the district, at which point the waters opened up and enabled them to pass. As one might guess the pursuers were all drowned when the river closed up again behind the Badagas.

While it may be true that the latest arrivals were fleeing from Tippu or the four Mysore Wars, the great bulk of the people were refugees from earlier scourges or were purposely brought to settle the hills. The 370 villages in which they now live were virtually all in existence when the British first settled there a mere twenty years after Tippu's death. By the start of the nineteenth century the Badagas were consolidated as a Nilgiri society and their work of colonization completed.

For the early days of their settlement we fortunately have the independent record of an Italian priest who visited the Nilgiris in 1603 and met both Badagas and Todas there. When we couple this fact with the linguistic evidence that Badagas speak an archaic dialect of Kannada, it becomes most likely that the first major wave of refugees arrived as the Moslem hordes were destroying the great Hindu empire of Vijayanagar in Karnataka in 1565. There is no doubt that this was the direction from which the Badagas came. Aside from speaking a dialect of Kannada, their very name means 'northerner', and their adherence to the

Lingayat faith is equally telling, for the sect is almost confined to Karnataka State.

Nor are Badaga legends more informative about the period *before* they left Mysore (i.e., Karnataka). The names of a few ancestral villages there are still recalled, but little else. The Ha:ruva clan are reputed (chiefly by themselves) to have been Brahmins; the Wodea phratry bears the same name as a high-ranking Lingayat subcaste in Mysore. But beyond these sparse ideas and the general impression that the refugees had not been urban we can really say nothing about 'Badaga' social organization prior to their migration from the core area. Perhaps that is the way they would have it, for there is nothing very relevant to their present organization in a pattern of hierarchically organized, multicaste villages—which is what recent Mysore society has been and presumably was in medieval times.

Once settled on the Nilgiri Hills the immigrants encountered challenges that were new to them. Life in Mysore during the Vijayanagar Empire and after its collapse had undoubtedly not been calm; indeed many during those troubled years were induced to desert their native villages. Yet the regulation of their lives had until this exodus been certain: the demands of the religious calendar, of caste regulations, of client and patron, and of the ruling families were well known and omnipresent. One could only escape from that society, if need be, by embracing nature in the guise of an ascetic.

In the Nilgiris the separation of society and nature was perhaps more severe, a stark contrast which would not brook the ambivalence of ascetics wandering beyond the pale of society into the comforting embrace of nature. Here asceticism was unknown and nature anything but warm: she flaunted a dismal climate in which men could easily die from exposure and cold when cut off from their fellows. The jungles surrounding every hamlet were infested with all the dangerous animals known to Mysore, but here they were more proximate, seemingly more numerous and minatory. The small community of Badagas collaborated comfortably with their neighbours, the Todas and Kotas. But around this plural society they all drew a rigid boundary: everything beyond it was the terrifying realm of the wild. It contained not only the obvious terrors, the tigers, panthers, elephants, hyenas, buffaloes, wolves and bears, but the even more frightening and mysterious Kurumba sorcerers, who could turn into any one of these animals. This sharp

division between nature and society was expressed in a variety of ways. Clearest perhaps was the ethical prescription that while it is evil for a Badaga to kill people he does good in the eyes of the community *and of God* if he kills Kurumbas or tigers, 'since these are both murderers' (as the matter was once explained to me). The Badagas have always been what would popularly be termed a most superstitious people: they suspect the sorcerer's artifice behind every noise in the jungle, every unexplained malady, every strange event; and they glean a multitude of tidings, both good and bad, from the everyday behaviour of snakes, crows, jackals, cattle and dozens of other creatures and conditions that surround them. A further indication of the gulf between nature and society is perhaps that in their pre-British law the severest Badaga punishment short of hanging was ostracism—expulsion from the village; and this was reserved for the enormity of incest.[2]

For an Indian peasant society the Badagas have some quite extraordinary features, fit to provide enough exotica for any undergraduate anthropology course. This fact has not been duly appreciated by the dozens of ethnologists who have come to the Nilgiris and attached themselves with passion to the colourful Todas or the shy jungle tribes. The Badagas may outwardly appear a much more 'typical' Indian farming community, and yet they do not have true subcastes or multicaste villages; they practise hypergamy *and* hypogamy even across the vegetarian boundary; several forms of polygamy are acceptable; they have a sort of young men's house; marriage is permitted across generation levels to the point where a man may in theory marry a woman *and* her daughter *and* her mother simultaneously, and villages hold a memorial ceremony once in fifty years when every member of a generation has died. Add to these features the frequent ghost exorcisms, fire-walking and occasional massacres, and the anthropologist has much to explain.

THE TERRAIN

The Nilgiri Hills, also known as the Blue Mountains, constitute a massif some 1500 sq. km. in area, situated in southern India at the juncture of the three linguistic and cultural areas of Karnatak, Malabar and Tamilnad. In the British period it was an administrative unit of the Madras Presidency. Today the Nilgiris form one

small district of Tamil Nadu, altogether covering 2543 sq. km. This is the homeland of the Badaga, Toda, Kota and Kurumba communities; nowadays numerous other peoples also live there.

The plateau is generally in the elevation of 2000–2500 m., and one peak, Doddabetta, among the highest in peninsular India, reaches 2633 m. In contrast to this the western quarter of the district averages around 1000 m. in elevation and forms a major portion of the Wainad Plateau. The main indigenous communities there are the Panias, Kurumbas, Nayakas and Chettis, but there are also a few Badagas (Wainad Gaudas) and Kotas.

The escarpment of the Nilgiri Plateau falls away very steeply, and on the eastern edge actually drops some 2000 m. in about 3 km. These slopes always have been covered in dense subtropical jungle which harbours tigers, leopards, buffaloes, elephants, snakes and malarial mosquitoes, and formerly dangerous hunting tribes still feared for their sorcery. Until the advent of the British early in the nineteenth century the three communities living on the summit of these hills—Badagas, Kotas and Todas—were therefore extremely isolated.

The undulating, unevenly wooded downland making up the entire plateau experiences considerable variation in rainfall. The Nilgiris receive from 60 to 160 inches of rain annually, depending on the topographical aspect. Western parts of the plateau rely mainly on the southwest monsoon in July and August; the eastern parts derive much of their rain from the northeastern monsoon in October-December. The average mean daily temperature in the centre of the plateau is around 15°C, while in the Wainad the climate is much hotter and wetter.

For the mildly invigorating qualities of its climate the plateau is therefore scarcely rivalled anywhere in the Asian tropics, and from 1819 British residents began to take advantage of this healthful region. Soon the towns of Coonoor, Kotagiri and Ootacamund (the district headquarters), and the military station at Wellington, took shape and expanded. More recently the town of Gudalur (Gudalu:ru) has grown up in the Wainad, at the foot of the western escarpment. Ootacamund, Coonoor and Gudalur are now the headquarters of the three administrative divisions or *taluks* into which the district was divided by the British.

THE NILGIRI POPULATION

When the British began to settle on the plateau they brought with

them a great variety of Tamilian, Mysorean, Malabari and other dependents, including a few Eurasians. With this contact people of southern India began to learn about the strange men, scarcely Hindus, who already inhabited these hills. Immigrants began to find labouring jobs on the tea and coffee plantations from the 1840s; and as they took up this new occupation they brought the indigenous Nilgiri tribes into closer contact with the traditions and practices of South Indian Hinduism. Today the plantations are the main source of the district income, and they attract an ever-increasing number of migrant labourers from elsewhere in South India. In 1971 there were some 370,000 immigrants living in the Nilgiris, three-quarters of the total population (see Appendix 1).

These immigrants belong to a wide range of castes. Normally, while maintaining occupational roles in Nilgiri society, they also attempt to continue the behaviour that distinguishes their own castes and try to keep up social ties with their places of origin. From the point of view of the indigenous communities, however, these caste distinctions are of little importance: immigrants are classified under seven rough headings—Tamilians, Kanarese, Andhras, Malayalis, Christians, Moslems and Europeans (lit. 'Kings'). The indigenous people are aware that there are caste divisions within these categories but are unconcerned with them; and as the immigrants are classed according to mother-tongue or religious creed, they are not even organized by the local residents into a simple caste hierarchy. It is true that Andhras, for example, are thought to have an inferior status; but this is because they are nearly always day-labourers for the Nilgiri farmers. Their low status, like that of other labourers, is determined by their poverty and poor education rather than by their caste affiliations. There *is* a status hierarchy in the Nilgiris, but it has economic and educational determinants that should not be confused with the ritual determinants of caste ranking elsewhere in India.

Except among Todas, Kotas and Europeans, the rate of population growth in this district has been remarkably high: for the decade 1961–1971 it was a staggering 38%, attributable to continuing immigration as well as to the increase of births over deaths. This greatly surpasses the State average of 22.3% and the all-India figure of 24.8%. This demographic factor, together with a high rate of literacy and the fact that plantations make this one of the wealthier districts in southern India, indicates that the Nilgiris are by no means typical of rural India. Indeed they tend towards

the upper extreme for the nation in population growth, volume of immigration, natural wealth, and—most important—rural literacy, education, and knowledge of the outside world.

NOTES

1. I have not adopted the popular but chauvinistic approach of seeking out the Aryan, Dravidian or autochthonous elements in Badaga culture—in my view, a sterile and simplistic exercise.
2. An ostracized person would not live in the jungle, but would look for a distant hamlet where he might be accepted; see below, p. 171, 198.

1

The Migration from Mysore

There is no doubt that before they settled in the Nilgiris the homeland of the Badagas lay in the Mysore Plain. Their own legends as well as those of the Kotas are quite explicit on this point, and some of the clans are even able to identify places in Mysore whence their ancestors came. (The most northerly village they now inhabit is still within Karnataka State.)

One need look no further than their language for confirmation of the legend. There are six discernible dialects of Baḍagu that we identify as Standard, Wodea, Kumba:ra-Be:da, Kundena:ḍu, Wainad and Ha:sanu:ru. The dialects are differentiated as much by vocabulary as by phonology and are demonstrably variant forms of Kannada speech. No linguist has ever claimed anything other than this for Baḍagu, since it and the Kannada of Mysore are, with some effort. mutually intelligible.

The very name *Baḍaga* is usually cited as prime evidence of their origin to the north of the Nilgiris:[1] the Kannada word *baḍaga* means 'northerner'. It also has the meaning 'servant'. If we postulate that the name derives from Kannada *baḍaka* instead, then we have the additional meanings 'lean, thin, feeble man' or 'a man who beats and bangs' (Kittel, 1894, 1068–1073). There are thus four possible etymologies for the name. The last two meanings verge on the scurrilous, however, and would hardly have been used by the immigrants in self-identification. One would expect such epithets to be applied to immigrants only by some other group, perhaps the Todas had they known Kannada; yet Todas now call

them *ma:v.* But were any of the Badagas ever servants?

There are two small phratries living on the northern edge of the plateau near Si:gu:ru. These are the Kumba:ras ('potters') and the Be:das ('hunters'), both of whom report they came initially to this locality while in the service of the chieftain of Ummattu:r (southern Mysore district). The title of 'servant' might have been applied to both these groups but that would not explain how the entire immigrant community came to be called *Baḍaga.* In this context it is particularly worth noting that most of the immigrants arrived before the Be:das and Kumba:ras, who reached the hills in the seventeenth century; yet in 1603 Finicio was already calling the whole community Badega.[2]

We are thus left with the presumption that Badagas are so called because of their northern origin.[3] The case of the Be:das and Kumba:ras, phratries with the same material culture and social organization as other Badagas and a demonstrable tie with Karnataka, merely bears out the connexion with that state.

The fact that a sizeable minority (over 10,000) of the community is Lingayat further underlines the tie with Mysore, for this religious sect finds nearly all of its followers within Karnataka State, virtually none being in Tamil Nadu apart from these in the Nilgiri region. Some Lingayat Badagas are even able to relate how their ancestors left two now-deserted villages in Mysore and that they were then already converts to Lingayatism (or Virashaivism).

DATING THE MIGRATION

Legends are always inaccurate over dates, if only because they pass from generation to generation without modification of reference to times past. There are, however, various other kinds of evidence which also shed some light on the dating of the migration.

Published Estimates

Several writers well versed in Badaga culture have hazarded guesses as to the dating, based in part on legends they heard. Serious attention should be paid, I feel, to the earlier publications:

Author	*Date of publication*	*Estimate*
John Sullivan	1819 (p. liv)	'about 300 years ago'
Benjamin Ward	1821 (p. lxx)	'about four centuries ago'
Thomas Baber	1830 (p. 315)	'about three centuries ago'
Henry Harkness	1832 (pp. 105–106)	'about six generations ago, during the anarchy which succeeded upon the downfall of the Vijayanagara empire,' i.e., 1565
Harry Congreve	1847 (p. 122)	'six generations ago'
John Ouchterlony	1848 (p. 81)	'3 or 4 centuries ago'
John Dulles	1855 (pp. 458–459)	'six generations since'
George Pope	1879 (p. 346, note)	"Many fled . . . in 1603"
William Stokes	1883b (p. 288)	'about 322 years ago'
Harold Stuart	1893 (p. 243)	'about three centuries ago'
Hanna Rhiem	1900 (p. 498, trans.)	'about three hundred years ago'
Edmond Périé	1933 (p. 97, trans.)	'some 350 years . . . when the Vijayanagar Empire collapsed'
M.K. Belli Gowder	1938–41 (pp. 5–8)	'seven hundred years back', or 'from 1300 to 1600'
N. Kariabettan	1958b (p. 2, trans)	'in the 11th Century'

It will be seen that nearly all of these authorities place the migration in the sixteenth century, which was when the Vijayanagar Empire (covering roughly Karnataka) broke up. M.K. Belli Gowder correctly dismisses the oft-mentioned ravages of Tippu Sultan in the late eighteenth century as a cause of the migration and instead suggests that the Moslem invasion responsible was that of Malik Kafur, the Sultan Ala-ud-din's favourite slave, who laid waste the Hoysala kingdom in 1311.[5] Kariabettan, another modern Badaga writer, presents no evidence whatever for his eleventh century dating and is not to be relied upon.

Linguistic Evidence

No competent study of Badagu has yet been completed, but

Dravidian scholars have noted its similarity to medieval Kannada; in particular the two forms of *r* in Baḍagu phonology reportedly 'had dropped out of use [i.e., in Kannada literature] prior to the time of the grammarian Késirája, who lived in the thirteenth century'.[6]

Other Historical Evidence

Here a small digression on mining is pertinent. Finds of Roman coinage in burials on the Wainad and Nilgiri Plateaux and in numerous hordes on the Coimbatore Plain suggest that traders with Rome were actively exploiting the gold mines of this area. We find no mention of gold from this region, however, in the (A.D. 100) *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea.* That there was indeed a native population in the Nilgiris and Wainad in the first millennium A.D. is indicated by the many cinerary burials of this period on the hilltops; several of these contained Roman coins. There is also a reference in the Tamil classic *Silappadikāram* to the Chera king Seṅguṭṭuvaṉ attending a dance performance at Nīlagiri with his army. (*Silappadikāram:* Vañjikaṇḍam, Kālkōṭ Kadai, xxvi, verses 85, 105, 120. See also Breeks, 1973; Grigg, 1880; Das, 1957; Naik, 1966; Hockings, 1975; Noble, 1976.)

Gold workings in the Nilgiri Wainad undoubtedly date back over many centuries:

> There are miles of country where almost every stone has been turned over, hillsides entirely sluiced away, mountain slopes simply honey-combed with shafts, remains of old aqueducts, adits, and bunds. . . . The existing caste of gold workers are the Korumbars, but they confine themselves entirely to alluvial washings. When questioned they tell you of a tradition . . . of hillmen called Vehdahs, . . . by whose hands all these wonderful quarryings were carried out (Sewell, 1882, 224).

The cinerary burials and Wainad gold mines have nothing to do with Badaga history, aside from a possibility that the chieftains of Ummattu:r fortified Nelliala before coming to the Nilgiri Plateau because they were engaged in gold mining thereabouts.

More relevant perhaps are accounts of old workings on the Nilgiris around Ootacamund and Nañjana:ḍu. Midway between the two places, on One Cairn Hill, there was apparently a

medieval town of gold or iron miners, whose mines were protected by a now-disappeared mud fortress. Traces of their town stretch for nearly a kilometer.[7] Badaga traditions do not mention this mining activity, and there is no basis for supposing Badagas initially occupied the hills as prospectors or mine-slaves. If such old quarries (which might even be Roman) have any relevance at all to Badaga history, it can only be because the Ummattu:r chieftains may have turned their eyes towards the Nilgiris in search of the gold that it was rumoured could be found there. In recent times there has been no gold mining in the district, except in the Wainad during the feverish speculation of 1879–1882. (Francis, 1908, 16–19; for other references, see Hockings, 1975, 49–50; 1978, 43–47).

While archaeology is of no assistance, kinship provides a rough guide to the antiquity of the Badaga community. The Gauda headman of Tu:ne:ri, paramount chief of the Badagas, can name nineteen generations of forefathers. His was probably the first village founded (Francis, 1908, 364), and as seventeen of the headmen were resident there the antiquity of Tu:ne:ri must go back to the early seventeenth century if we allow twenty years per generation.[8]

Another line of argument is that all Hindu Badagas are Shaivites (including those who are Virashaivas), whereas in southern Mysore there is now a large minority of Vaishnavites. That sect had its inception there with the conversion of the Mysore kings to Vaishnavism around 1610, which suggests that the Badagas were already in the Nilgiris by that date and so not affected in the way that lowland communities were (Grigg, 1880, 218; Macleane, 1893, 64; Wilks, 1930, vol. I, 52). That some if not all were indeed in the hills was confirmed by Finicio (1603).[9]

It has been argued that the respect shown to Badagas by the Todas and Kotas, for example in customary salutations, indicates that they had entered the Nilgiris while the Mysore kings were still in the ascendancy and had some territorial claims over the Nilgiris (Grigg, 1880, 218; see below, 112). The Be:da phratry, who arrived rather more recently as huntsmen and tax collectors in the retinue of the chieftain of Ummattu:r, 'still call the Mysore chiefs . . . their Kartas or lords' (Grigg, 1880, 268–269, quoting Metz, 1864). Such an argument does not accord with the widespread tale of flight from Moslem oppressors, which depicts some Badagas initially coming to the Nilgiri tribes with caps in hand:

'Because of the trouble that the Mohammedan made for us . . . we have come, making ourselves to escape. This country is yours . . . We are helpless. You must help us.' Such is the Kota version. In response a council of Todas, Kotas and Kurumbas allowed the Badagas to settle provided they paid the now-customary tribute to these tribes (Harkness, 1832, 106–107; Natesa Sastri, 1892, 735–754; Rhiem, 1900, 498; Emeneau, 1946, 257; see below, 113–116). Not all Badagas migrated within a generation or two, and while some may have been fleeing from Moslem soldiers other bands came later for other reasons.

Clearly there were several waves of immigrants brought sometimes by famine conditions, sometimes by Moslem attempts at forcible conversion, sometimes perhaps by a Mysorean policy to colonize the hills. The Kotas are explicit that once a few Badagas had arrived more came over the succeeding years (Belli Gowder, 1938–1941, 3; Emeneau, 1946, 259). The early explorers Ward (1821) and Harkness (1832) both recorded that the people had settled over many years, and Ward added that some had been 'invited' there by the chieftains of Ummattu:r, under whose suzerainty the Nilgiris had rested for a period. This story suggests that some Badagas, refugees from famine rather than Islam, had settled in the hills as part of a pacification programme aimed at increasing the revenue there.[10] Others, it is popularly believed, fled from Moslem rulers who wanted to marry or seduce good-looking Hindu girls. In search of refuge from this threat they travelled up to 150 km. On reaching the hills the women were given facial tattoos and dressed in white cloths (as they still are) to resemble Kota women, while men adopted the Toda shawl for greater warmth: in effect a conscious and lasting attempt was made to resemble the hill tribes and to adopt a tribal model of social organization.[11]

The early pattern of occupancy was one of scattered homesteads in widely separated parts of the plateau. These clusters of small wooden huts grew into lineage centres and so into villages, usually maintaining strict exogamy. Until the advent of *Pax Britannica* in the early nineteenth century, the houses were built around three sides of a plaza, with its open side facing downhill for defensive purposes. Today only De:na:du preserves that plan; the other villages, of which there are about 370, are made up of several parallel lines of houses running along a hillside. Traditionally the senior brother among the patrilineal descendants of the founder

was the village headman. Neighbouring villages (*haṭṭi*), though of different lineages and even of different phratries, grouped themselves together for protective purposes under the headmanship of one prominent village into what I have called communes (*u:r*).[12] Thus Ke:ti, for example, is the leading village in Ke:ti commune, which embraces fifteen other contiguous villages, most of them belonging to one maximal lineage *(kuḍumbu)*. The village headman of Ke:ti is also headmen of the commune.

We shall now examine legends of how the various clans and phratries became established on the hills to clarify the history of this intermittent migration. The recently formed Christian phratry will not be considered at this point, as it is more relevant to my discussion of modern cultural change.[13] The Christians, whether Protestant or Catholic, are distributed among fourteen intermarrying clans which trace their descent from six of the Hindu phratries.

The categories in what follows are treated roughly in order of social superiority. This hierarchy is not accepted, however, by Ha:ruvas and their supporters. Since Ha:ruvas come from the Brahma sept they have recently laid claim to an origin as Brahmins and therefore see themselves as superior to Wodeas and all other Badagas. At the other extremity they consider the Kumba:ras and Be:das to rank below Toreas, since the traditional occupations of the former—potters and huntsmen—could place them below Torea servants in the caste ideology of the Indian plains. The great majority of Badagas, in contrast, place Wodeas at the top and Toreas at the bottom of their social hierarchy.

WODEAS

The Badaga Lingayats are generally acknowledged to have been among the later groups to arrive. The contention that they were already Lingayat at that time (Macleane, 1893, 64) provides a meagre clue to the date of their migration, for their sect was founded in the mid-twelfth century and this constitutes a *terminus post quem*. Within sixty years of the founder's death (traditionally A.D. 1168) this egalitarian Hindu faith had spread throughout the Kannada-speaking region. It became the state religion when King Vijaya Wodeyar came to the throne in 1399 and remained so until 1610. However a descendant of his, Raja Wodeyar (who ruled from 1578 to 1617), drove the eponymous Wodeya chieftain Udaiya Raya of Ummattu:r up into the Nilgiris and captured his

Map 1. Map to illustrate the migrations of the Badagas.

realm in 1613. Badaga Wodeas now claim to have come with this man and to be descended through him from the royal house of Mysore (Grigg, 1880, 218, 220, 225; Natesa Sastri, 1892, 754–755; Rice 1897, vol. II, 296, 364; Hayavadana Rao, 1930, vol. V, 862). Some came from the Lingayat monastery at Aṅgala and first settled at a subsequently deserted village called Ukkupalle, near