

Origin of the Toreas and their Expansion to the Nilgiris District

H. R. Sumathi

Assistant Professor in History, Vellalar College for Women, Erode – 638012, Tamil Nadu, India;
hrsumathiraj@gmail.com

Abstract

The Torear or Toreas are a tribe of Karnata (present Karnataka) although many of them have been long settled in Erode, Coimbatore, Salem and Mysore Districts. Those found in the plains are said to have once been fisherman and palanquin bearers and are now engaged as cultivators, contractors, petty tradesman and police constables. Although it is that certain Toreas of this caste went to the Nilgiris. The Toreyar hence became his subjects and servants, when the chief of the Ummattur Wodea was driven out by his rival Wodea Raja of Mysore over the tract of Melekotte in the Nilgiri region in 1610 A.D. The principal reason of it was the religious dominance between the two sects of Hinduism-Saivite and Vaishnavite, which created the state-wide disorder. When the Lingayat Wodear was emigrating over the Tamil soil, in several waves the Torear also followed them. So that Torear erected their hamlets near the nucleus villages of the Badugar to serve for their needs of their new masters. Because the Badugar was indigenous people of the Nilgiris District. The Toreas had no antique history in the region of the Nilgiris before 1610 A.D. So that today's practical reason for writing the work of the Toreas is comprehensively obvious and cogent. This research is to have and preserve a real history of the Toreas. This paper will serve its purpose to take an extensive view of the formidable but fascinating flux of the affairs of the Torear community.

Keywords: Emigration, Karnataka, Lingayat, Nilgiris, Raja Wodea, Torear, Ummattur

1. Introduction

The Nilgiris are a mountain block in southern India, formed by the convergence of the two great systems of mountain range which give rise to the Peninsular: the Eastern and Western Ghats. It is about 200 miles from the sea on the Coramendal coast and 40 miles from that on the Malabar. The boundary line passes through Sundapatty, Sispara, Mukoorthy peak Nelgherry peak, Neddiwuttam (Naduvattam) along that river, in a southwest direction, to Sundapatty. On the south and west, a long narrow of the hills form the boundary, on the North and East, the slopes and some four or five miles of the plains. The area may roughly be taken as 1000 square miles. It lies between latitude 11°8' and 11°37' North and longitude 76°27' and

77°4' East and it is bounded on the North by Mysore state, on the Northwest and west by Kerala and on the South, East and North-East by Coimbatore District. The length of the district is about 35 miles and its breadth about 20 miles. It is made up of an area of 950 square miles. The aborigines of the Nilgiris are the Badugar, Todar, Kotar, Kurumbar and Irular¹. Now various people of other communities such as the Wodear, Kongar and Torear were also living after 1610 A.D. The Torear or Toreas are a tribe of Karnata² (present Karnataka) although many of them have been long settled in Erode, Coimbatore, Salem and Mysore Districts. Those found in the plains are said to have once been fisherman and palanquin bearers³ and are now engaged as cultivators, contractors, petty tradesman and police constables. Although it is that certain Toreas

*Author for correspondence

of this caste went to the Nilgiris. The present study is focused mainly on the Toreas of the Nilgiri District, who are known for their own identity, distinct features and needs.

2. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To study the Torear expansion to the Nilgiris and migration to the plains.
- To recognize the strength and weakness of the migration theory.
- To know the Torear habitats in the Nilgiri District and their distribution.

3. Methodology

In the present study, field research has been done. The personal interview has been planned to comprise both formal and informal discussions regarding the Toreas daily life, customs, economic, rituals, festivals, faith and beliefs. The case study method has been found to be very useful to present the attitude and aptitude of the Toreas related to their livelihood.

4. Origin of Toreas

The Torear had been living at the neighboring villages of Karugalli⁴ in Mysore. During the 15th and 16th centuries, the Vijayanagar kings had bestowed on or confirmed to vassal chiefs, bearing various titles, sundry tracts in Mysore, on the condition of payment of tribute and rendering of military service. The Southern chiefs were placed under a viceroy termed Sri Ranga Rayal, whose seat of government was at Srirangapatnam. After the

1565 the fall of Vijayanagar, the chiefs gradually broke loose of control and declared their independence. Each of their chiefs will be found in connection with the localities which formed their respective estates on the South, the Wodeyars of Mysore, Kalale Ummattur, Yelandur and others⁵. The Wodeyas of Mysore and Ummattur were concerned with the Nilgiris.

The Torear chief of Karugahalli wanted to marry a Wodea girl of Hadanad (1399) in Nanjangud whose father was in unsound mind had wandered in the forest. Vijaya and Krishna the two adventures from the North appeared on the scene killed the Torear chief (of that caste) and Vijaya married her. He had occupied the Government of Hadanad and Karugahalli⁶, the Toreyar hence became his subjects and servants, when the chief of the Ummattur Wodea was driven out by his rival Wodea Raja of Mysore over the tract of Melekotte in the Nilgiri region in 1610 A.D. The principal reason of it was the religious dominance between the two sects of Hinduism - Shaivite and Vaishnavite, which created the state-wide disorder. The Vaishnava Kings of Karnataka had persecuted the Shaivite Lingayats which affected their diffusion within the Mysorean territory; their servant Torear of different villages accompanied their master to the plateau. When the Lingayat Wodear was emigrating over the Tamil soil, in several waves the Torear also followed them.

5. Date of Expansion of the Toreas

Instead of segregating the two units, i.e. First unit, the Badugar, second unit is the Wodeas and Toreas, the Westerners on account of their assumed identity had merged them into a whole and given different dates⁷ for their common inflow as follows:

Table 1. Date of Expansion of the Toreas

S. No	Author	Date of Publication	Period of Expansion
1.	William Keys	1814 (1812)about300 Years	1514
2.	Thomas Baber	1830 about 300 Years ago	1530
3.	John Ouchterlony	1848 about 300 Years ago	1548
4.	William Stokes	1883 about 322 Years ago	1561
5.	W. W. Hunter	1886 about 300 Years ago	1586

6.	Harold Stuart	1893 about 3 Centuries	1593
7.	Hanna Rhiem	1900 about 300 Years ago	1600
8.	Edmund Perie	1933 some 350 Years ago	1583

Source: William Keys (1814), in the appendix of H. B. Grigg's Manual 1880, Madras, xviii, John Ouchterlony, A Geographical and statistical memoir of a survey of the Neilgherry Mountains, Madras, 1847, Hunder W.W. Imperial Gazetteers of India, London, 1886.

The above table seems that researcher have turn aside into three groups and have maintained three different views of their period of expansions over the Nilgiri. 1. Before the fall of Vijayanager 2. During the anarchy of Vijayanagar Empire and 3. After the fall of the Vijayanagar Empire in 1565. From 1814 to 1933, for a span of 119 years, most of the western writers have said a tercentennial period ago? Mere quoting of the previous writer's from 1814 alone was insufficient to establish a theory but such citing should be chronologically examined with the principle of independent inquisition. In the absence of it there was a stereotyped mentioning as referred to above.

It doubtlessly proved that one followed another and who has followed another.

6. Causes for the Expansion of the Torear

Three causes for the widening of the Canarese Lingayats and their associates, Torear are as follows:

As per the following table said three causes were for the above said people and not for Badugar, the ancient of the Nilgiris above said groups as already mentioned expanded over the Nilgiris only after 1610 A.D. Hence my

Table 2. Causes for the Expansion of the Tareas

S.No	Author	Causes-1	Causes-2	Causes-3
1.	Rev. James Hough (1829)	-	Cruelty	Oppression of local Government
2.	Ouchterlony (1847)	Famine	Political persecution	Oppression of local Government
3.	H .B. Grigg (1880)	Famine	Political turmoil	Local suppression
4.	W. Francis (1908)	Famine	Political turmoil	Local suppression
5.	Edgar Thruston (1909)	Famine	Political turmoil	Local suppression
6.	M. A. Sheering (1974)	Famine	Political turmoil	Local suppression

Sources: James Hough, Letters on the Climate, Inhabitants, Production of South India, the London 1829, Grigg H.B. A Manual of the Administration of the Nilgiris in the Madras Presidency, Madras, 1880, Francis, W, The Gazetteer of the Nilgiris, Madras, 1908.

view is different from the said others and it is also a new and critical look.

Above table, analysis of data no famine at Mysore forced the widespread of them over the Nilgiris and on the Tamil soil. The principal reason of it was the religious dominance between the two sects of Hinduism which created the statewide disorder⁸. The Vaishnava kings of Karnataka had persecuted the Shaivet Lingayats which affected their diffusion within the Mysorean territory, the Nilgiris and to other Linguistic lands.

7. Religio-political Despotism and Expansion

According to F. J. Richards "Lingayat religion is anti Brahmanic and anti-Jain. Their temples are popularly called, 'Bull' Temples or Temples of Basaveswara Swami and their ritual prohibits blood sacrifice⁹. As they are the worshippers of portable Lingam and accordingly conflicting the principles of Vaishnavism. Both the creed's stood face to face at Karnataka and the victims were the Shaivit Lingayats. In the Bellary district, "A dispute of long standing exists between the Brahmans and Lingayats of Rayadroog, as to the emblems which the latter may carry in procession. An agreement between the parties was drawn up by the Collector in 1901 after a long conference"¹⁰.

Udayaraja (a chief), a defender of Lingayat faith of Ummattur in Chamrajanasar at Nanjangud, was driven out by his rival Wodea Raja of Mysore over the tract of Melekotte in the Nilgiri region as stated above. He followed Vaishnavism and "subdued the insubordinate Lingayat Wodeas and ryots who were deprived and kept in confinement"¹¹. In those days, "to the people of Mysore, service in the hilly region was equivalent to banishment or to life in a penal settlement"¹². So the Ummattur chief was pushed over the hilly Nilgiris. Lingayat faith was the state religion of the Wodeas of Mysore from the end of the fourteenth to the beginning of the seventeenth century, when Raja Wodeyar (1578 to 1617) adopted the religion of Vishnu and persecuted the subordinate Wodeas or heads of district, one of whom fled to the Nilgiris.

This flight may amount for the number of Wodea and Torea settlements on the hills - which is remarkable, considering the social pre-eminence of the class, it being that of the Mysorean Rajas and the Lingayat inhabitants¹³.

As an evacuee, from Nanjangud he came via Gundelpet, climbed up the Seegur Ghat and settled near Kalthatty (a Baduga Village) with his family members, relatives, supporters and Torea servants. Some of the Wodea Lingayats have followed the same route with the Torea and familiarized at Tattanari around Akoni in the tract of Kalthatty. As a chief he had requested the personal Bedaru and Kumbararu who were the peons and servants of him or of his forerunner to settle over the hills¹⁴. They also had followed the same journey to the Nilgiris, the former were employed as tax gatherers from the common Badugar and settled in the same part and the latter had inhabited two Villages in the area of Malekote. There was a ruined "Bull Temple" at Malekote, attended by a Chittre class of Lingayat faith whose ancestors were associated to the Raja of that fort¹⁵.

In the Northern edge of the Nilgiri, there was an earliest hamlet of non-Lingayat viz, Pusakunnar¹⁶. Another group of Lingayats from Ummattur first settled at Ukkapalli (halli is a Kannadu word for a Village) and most of them abandoned it and had joined with other Lingayats in the plateau and a few Toreas of that region of Melhatty who came with the Lingayat Wodeas had been living there till today.

Thongs of Lingayat Wodeas, Ummattur Kongaru and Toreas who came from Sargour having missed their way and ascended the plateau to Kil Kotagiri by the Gajalhatty pass on the Coimbatore side, others have descended and settled in the Tamil soil. Segur and Gajalhatty passes are the entry points to the Nilgiris.

8. Toreas in the Nilgiris

The Torea of Mysorian expanders were in large number next to the inborn Badugar on the top hills had followed two foot paths in two directions. "here is a choice of two routes, either down to Gajalhatty pass and up to Coonoor or to Gundelpet and then to "Ootacamund"¹⁷. Hundreds of Lingayats and Toreas through the passes of Gajalhatty, Ambour, Muggler, Changama and Pulicaud migrated over Sathiamangalam, Bhavani, Coimbatore, Erode, Selam and Authur and have settled there. Until then the faith was unknown in the Tamil soil.

The Torea came to the Nilgiris and had been living at the low edge of the Badugar villages. The Ummattur Urs or Arasu encouraged the Lingayats, Toreas, Beders and

Kumbaras from Mysore to settle on the Nilgiris and they were the late comers. The Toreas came from Valladi and settled in various parts of the Hills.

A common origin for the Nilgiris and lowland Torear is possible because both belong to Naga and Belli sects. Till recently the Nilgiri Torear married from the Tamil plains and Mysore. Now they wed among their affinal groups in the Nilgiri. The Torear of Hasanur now link with the Torear of Mysore.

In the Tamil plains the Toreas are said to have once been fishermen and palanquin bearers. The Badugar "call them 'sons' an ambiguous term that may refer to their servile state. According to Francis Buchachanan, the Toreas are a kind of caste called 'Besta' that in the Southern parts of Mysore are very numerous and are an original tribe of Karnataka. They are under the principal designation Besta (hired labourer-caste title) of Mysore, an inferior caste. They call themselves cooking clan. According to C. Hayavadana Rao, Toraya is also called Yakula which means cultivators or class of fisherman.

They are presumed to have descended from the Gangadikar sect of the Vokkalia community and Gangadikar means a low caste. In Badugu Thore means a stream or river bank which is always in the low slope. So that it signifies the low status of that caste (Throe-Low slope). Edgar Thruston, in his *Caste and Tribes of South India Vol-VII, 1909; 176* had stated that the derivation of that name is from Turai (It is a tamil word), river ghat which also means the low status of them.

Badugar never called them Toraer but it was a Mysorean caste name. They were at the lowest ebb in all respects in Mysore. The same condition was prevailed in the Nilgiris. None stayed in the low slops in the Nilgiris than the Toreas in those days and even to this day.

All the 12 villages of the Torear are in the low valley of Kil-Kotagiri and its equivalent is to the Torai, i.e, river bank. All other Torear villages are of the same nature in the low side of the Badugar villages.(at the lower end of the Badugar). Hence the Torear means dwellers of the low area of the Nilgiris and Nilgirian village. More commonly they were the dwellers of haven of a sea or port. Torai means also a place decent in to a tank or stream (in the ghat). Another meaning of the word is a resort place or of a river ford, gives the above meaning. Hence they may be called Besta (living nearby river banks as were/are called fisherman). Another description is Gangamakalu

because they had been living near the bank of river Ganges.

Metz (1864, P.60) has also specified that the Torear were the servants of the Badugar before they left Mysore but they were the servants of the Wodears at Mysore. (As stated by Paul Hockings, *Ancient Hindu Refugees*, p: 33 quoted from Henry Harkness, but Henry Harkness had never stated so). Hence Paul Hocking has misquoted it. He acknowledged so, for the purpose of census, the Wodear and Torear were included with the Badugar. In the Nilgiris, the Wodear are in 12 villages whereas the Torear are in 43 villages (see Annexure II) and the Torear are more than the required number of servants for the Wodear and with the same state they had relied on the common Badugar. When the Badugar were the indigenous of the Nilgiris, Harkness had wrongly considered them as migrants from Mysore. The Thorear never worked under the Badugar at Mysore.

Other than exceptional cases, the Torear habitations in the Nilgiris are nearby the commune head villages of the Common Badugar. The servants of the common Badugar erected their hamlets possibly near the nucleus villages of the common Badugar to serve for their needs of their new masters.

The history of those 43 villages of Torear expanders was not the history of the indigenous Common Badugar villages of the Nilgiris. Both the groups have divergent history in the Nilgiris in origin, language, religion and culture and that was not cognizanced by William keys, by his obscure notice, instead of separating the natives from the expanders, he simply grouped them into three, Badugaru, Linguvant and Toreas as migrants from Mysore and thus emerged the factual error.

Whish and Kindersley (1819) the assistants of the collector had submitted their reports to the collector and to the government at Madras. Hence John Sullivan, the Collector, is there with commissioned to explore the origin of the tremendous tales that are circulated concerning the Blue Mountains, to confirm their authenticity and to send a report to the higher authorities. All the subsequent western writers by mistaken of identity had considered the custom of the Wodearu and Torearu as that of the Common Badugar of the Nilgiris. The unspoken western Justification was the Muslim invasion over the Vijayanagar Empire and the fall of it (1565) or during its anarchy. It was basically wrong.

Table 3. Distribution of Toreas hamlets and their population in the Nilgiris

S.No	Name of the Nadu	Total No. of Toreas Settlements	Total No. of Toreas Households	Total Population
1	Toda Nadu	13	374	2107
2	Poranganadu	23	1672	6861
3	Mekku Nadu	5	345	1074
4	KundeeSeeme	2	19	60
	Total	43	2410	10102

Sources: Field Survey on 4.05.2011

Paul Hockings has wrongly viewed, “Gaudas (Common Badugar) in the commune of Tudegur (which surrounds Malkote) claim to have come from the ten villages north of the Nilgiri slopes in the retinue of these chiefs, but they were the ancients. The villages of the retinue of the Ummattur chiefs, constructed after 1610 in the local of Tudege (Tudekule or Tudegui) were Nerimora, Kumpule, Asaganthore, Bannimora, Tattaneri, Kalhatty (Lingayats), Seegur, Athikore, Kauva, Ekkathur and Kanukundy. Adjoining the fort, the Ummattur chiefs and their relatives and the guards of the fort had lived in separate groups in families.

According to researcher collected data from 2011 onwards total settlements of Torear were 43. In Poranganadu division was higher than other three Nadas in the Nilgiris District, because most of the Torear people expanded via Gazzalahatty pass and upto Coonoor, i.e. Poranganadu division. Another group expanded to Gundalpet and then to Odhagamandalam, i.e. Todanadu. Our data reveals the fact that there are few Torearhatts located in Devernattam region of Erode District, who had expanded from Mysore through the Gazzalahatty pass.

When they followed the Wodea ruling powers they dwelled in various places in the Nilgiris, mostly near the common Badugar villages. When the land was so vast than the need of the aborigines, then there was no problem for the Torear settlements. They constructed their residences with local timbers and grasses for roofing’s.

The forest near by their habitants supplied them fuels for their kitchens. As their villages were near by the common Badugar, drinking water facilities was not a problem and they used water sources of the Common

Badugar. When they worked as servants to the Wodeas and Common Badugas, gradually they got food grains from the common Badugar for their own cultivation and produced them for their livelihood. They purchased the cattle from the Nilgirians and domesticated them for milk and its products. Local fruits, greens, mushrooms and honey supplemented their daily food and the cloth they got from the chetty merchants of Serumagai in Tamil Nadu and from Gundelpet in Mysore¹⁸.

When they settled in the Nilgiris there was no opposition from the Badugar because they were in a state of isolation and the Toreas expansion never disturbed their ancient living and further the ancients got sufficient numbers of servants to work in their fields. There was vast grassing ground for the Toreas cattle. All the dwellings of them were in the beginning with few families only. Further their kin’s men came and join with them and there by emerged the present state of villages. There was no village of Badugar at Kil-Kotagiri because that was an isolated area. There was no language problem between them because both can speak each other’s language.

According to Paul Hockings “the community was faced with the problem of adapting to the new geographical and social environment and clearly succeeded in doing so”¹⁹. This view is fittingly applicable to the Lingayat Wodeas and their associates in the Nilgiris. In the newly stepped in land with different climate and topography from their homely atmosphere in the Mysorean plains, they have constructed new residences, occupied lands as the ruling class, collected revenue, resumed their relation with Mysore and clearly surmounted in doing so amid the socially, religiously and culturally detached aboriginal

Badugar. He recalled (S.D.M.C.1980:80), “by the arrival of occasional new settlers from Mysorean plains, who were accepted into the growing community”. This expression is accurately suitable to the Mysorean Canarese Wodeas and their suite on the Nilgiri, but not with the aborigines.

9. Conclusion

From the inception, the Westerner’s mainstay of that erroneous migratory theory of the first unit was due to the incorporation of the largest majority of non Lingayats with that of the meagre minority of the Canarese Linyayat Wodeas and Toreas and their associates along with the indigenous converts (in the Nilgiri) as of the same stock. It caused a very remarkable disturbance in the atmosphere of history of the Toreas, Beder and Kumbaras. When a historical theory doesn’t agree with the general structure, it may safely pronounce it to be unfounded. Culture is a sort of theatre and source of identity. It includes the language, religion, custom, practice and tradition. The cleavage culture of the Toreas and Lingayats are analysed and portrayed which had engulfed them but was improperly bridged by the Western writing.

The complete segregation is the greater spatial dissimilarity and social distancing between the Lingayats and Toreas. From the beginning the Westerners failed to have a rational classification of a matter so simple in its main outline as seen above. Finally what do the Toreas think of themselves? They assort and consider themselves, a separate and segregate group from the Lingayats and the common Badagas, Bedas and Kumbaras.(Paul Hockings, Blue Mountain, 1989:180, quoted from David Mandlebaum, 1972).

The Pre-requisite to infer the history of the indigenous people is to delink the people of the Toreas from them in every sphere. The Toreas has a separate history in the Nilgiris since 1610. It is preposterous to conjoin different social and cultural history of both the group in the pate.

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