



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

(India - Funerary Ritual of the Toda) The Kirt Morrt or Cemetery. Ootacamund Neilgherries. 1830

Stock#: 86590
Map Maker: Anonymous
Date: 1830
Place: Ooty, Nilgris
Color: Pen & Ink with Wash Color
Condition: VG
Size: 16.25 x 11.5 inches
Price: \$ 1,100.00



Description:

A fascinating original drawing made in 1830 in Ootacamund (today known more commonly as Ooty), in the Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu.

The drawing depicts members of the Toda people, a Dravidian ethnic group who historically ruled the land before it was taken over by the British East India Company in the 18th century. The Toda men are engaged in their traditional funerary practice of sacrificing buffalo at the site of burial. Some men lead the buffalo around, while others are armed with clubs with which to dispatch the animals.

To the left of the image is shown the traditional thatched hut of the Toda, which is called a *dogles*. The rounded roof and very small door are characteristic of the *dogles*.

This drawing is probably related to a survey of the area that was made in the early 1830s by Henry Harkness. This resulted in two works, both of which were illustrated by Captain E.A. McCurdy. In 1831, Harkness sent from Madras a manuscript that was published in London under the title *A Description of a Singular Aboriginal Race Inhabiting the Summit of the Neilgherry Hills*. That work includes the following description of the area depicted here:

Proceeding in the first instance towards the ruins of a fortress, lying north-west of Ootacamund, we soon came in view of the morrt of Meyni, the scenery of which is beautiful and picturesque in the extreme. It is situated on a gentle slope, near the foot of a range of hills, and just below a graceful opening, through which dark grey mountains appear in the distance, rising up, as it would seem,



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from the very centre of the earth.

The second work was a set of plates by McCurdy titled *Views of the Nielgherries, or Blue Mountains of Coimbeoor, Southern India: The Seremoogy or Streemooga Pass, Neilgherry Mountains; Kotagherry looking down on the plains of Coimbeoor; View of part of the lake and cottages Ottacamund from Cluny; Front view of the Great Dodabetta Ottacamund.*

While McCurdy's work, at least as translated into lithography, seems to be more refined than the present drawing, the timing and subject focus of Harkness and McCurdy suggest a connection with that effort.

An interesting ethnographic drawing from south-central India.

Detailed Condition:

Pen and watercolor on wove paper. Some generalized soiling, more obvious in the sky. Backed on card though delaminating in a few of the corners.