

## PREFACE

Klaus Karttunen

The tradition of Indology in Finland was, for a long time, a rather modest one, but its roots go back close to the very beginning of European Indology. While the teaching of Sanskrit started in France in 1815, in Germany at the beginning of the 1820s and in other European countries in the 1830s or 1840s, the first course of elementary Sanskrit, given by Ivar Ulrik Wallenius, is mentioned in the printed curricula of the University of Helsinki in 1835. The first docentship of Sanskrit was conferred on Herman Kellgren in 1849 and the first chair of (personal) Professor on Otto Donner in 1875. Since that date Sanskrit has always been included on the curricula, and in the second half of the 20th century, the teaching of modern languages such as Hindi and Tamil was also introduced.

In Europe, original interest in Sanskrit was partly founded on romantic enthusiasm for Sanskrit literature and partly on the beginning of comparative Indo-European linguistic research. It was soon noted that Sanskrit was clearly related to the great majority of European languages and that its knowledge was essential for any study of their linguistic relations. In many universities the chairs of Sanskrit and comparative linguistics were combined. This was also the case in Helsinki; The reason why Sanskrit classes here mostly had only a small number of participants is probably due to the fact that Finnish as a Finno-Ugrian language is unrelated to Sanskrit. Nevertheless, the study of Sanskrit and comparative linguistics was considered important from the methodological viewpoint and the majority of the early Finnish scholars of comparative Finno-Ugrian and Uralic linguistics also knew Sanskrit.

At an early period, Vedic philology became an important part of Finnish Indology. In 1870, Otto Donner published his doctoral dissertation on a ritual belonging to the Vedic cult of ancestors (*Piṇḍapitṛyajña. Das Manenopfer mit Klössen bei den Indern.* 36 p. Berlin 1870). Donner's pupil, Julio Natanael Reuter, wrote his dissertation in 1891 on nominal compounds in Sanskrit, but soon

concentrated on textual studies, especially on the texts of Sāmavedic ritual. His magnum opus was the first part of the critical edition, *The Śrautasūtra of Drāhyāyana, with a commentary of Dhanvin*, published in London in 1904. The second part was typeset, but was never printed; the third part remained in manuscript form. The whole manuscript is kept at Helsinki University Library.

It is to this tradition that the young Asko Parpola was linked. As a pupil of Pentti Aalto (like myself ten years later), he started to study Reuter's work. While the idea of printing the rest of Reuter's edition as such was clearly unsatisfying, and an additional revision with the help of new manuscripts was clearly needed, he took up as a preliminary work the full critical translation of the Drāhyāyanaśrautasūtra which also contains all the variants given in the nearly identical Lātyāyanaśrautasūtra. A general introduction to this work (141 pages with appendices), which was his doctoral dissertation, was published in 1968 (*The Śrautasūtras of Lātyāyana and Drāhyāyana and their commentaries*, I:1. Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum 42:2. Helsinki) and the first part of the translation, containing the Agniṣṭoma portion or about one fifth of the whole, came out the following year (*The Śrautasūtras of Lātyāyana and Drāhyāyana and their commentaries*, I:2. Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum 43:2. Helsinki).

The appearance of this young scholar's work, which was soon followed by a series of articles on related themes, immediately established his fame as a specialist on Vedic ritual and Sāmavedic literature. In 1971, the first visit to India made him familiar with the still living Vedic ritual traditions of South India and with the vast treasures of unpublished manuscripts still preserved both in public libraries and in private ownership. Particularly valuable were the finds belonging to the rare Jaiminīya Śākhā of the Sāmaveda.

Though much engaged in other kinds of work, Asko has never really put aside this early interest in Vedic ritual. In the early 1980s, he started his regular, almost annual, fieldwork visits to the few existing Jaiminīya villages of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, especially in Pāññāl in Kerala, and he began his collaboration with the learned, traditional Jaiminīya scholar Śrī Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Iṭṭi Ravi Nampūtiri (d. 1989). The work has resulted, among others, in a great number of microfilms of manuscripts, recordings of recitation, and video recordings of rituals and other traditions. Here we must also note the role of Mrs. Marjatta Parpola, who accompanied her husband on most of these field trips. At the same time she both helped and supported Asko in his studies and developed herself into an independent scholar of social anthropology working on the Nambūdiri Brahmins.

Still a student, Asko developed an interest in the riddle that many considered unsolvable: the script of the Indus civilization. The core of the problem with this earliest writing system of India lies in the extreme brevity of all preserved texts and in the complete absence of any bilingual texts. Together with his Assyriologist

brother Simo Parpola, his teacher Pentti Aalto and the computer specialist Seppo Koskenniemi, Asko formed a team to work on this riddle in the 1960s.

I cannot go into the details here. The preserved texts were collected, computerised, analysed and compared both with similar texts found in other parts of the world in similar contexts and with such languages and language groups which could be taken as possible candidates for the language spoken in the Indus civilization. The breakthrough consisted of the interpretation of two graphemes as grammatical elements, whose pictorial content received a logical explanation from Dravidian. This decipherment was published in three fascicles in 1969–70.

Although the basic idea was important, the team included in these early publications a number of uncertain and controversial interpretations, and the criticism turned out to be severe, partly openly negative. Asko, however, did not give up. Discarding the too rash optimism of the early phase in attempting a complete decipherment, he has worked on a great number of details in a long series of articles. He has concentrated on one point at a time and expanded the study from a mere attempt to explain the writing into a comprehensive approach to the religion of the Indus civilization and to its relations with the ancient Near East, particularly Mesopotamia, on the one hand, and with later, Vedic and Dravidian India, on the other hand. In 1994, it was finally time for a mature general survey (*Deciphering the Indus Script*. Cambridge). An important side-issue is the complete *Corpus of Indus Seals and Inscriptions*, an essential help for all future studies, of which the two first volumes appeared in 1987 and 1991, and two more are on the way.

I must also mention Asko Parpola as a meticulous philologist and a demanding teacher, as an eminent expert on Indian religion, and as a specialist in bridging various fields and in combining the methods and results of philology, archaeology and religious studies. A particular importance can certainly be given to his studies of the archaeological context of Pre-Vedic and early Vedic phase of the Indo-Aryans. The monograph *Sky Garment* (*Studia Orientalia* 57. Helsinki 1985) can be mentioned here as a major example of his approach to find and define the originally non-Aryan element in the Vedic religion and to connect it with the material and pictorial remains of the Indus civilization, while the long article "The coming of the Aryans to Iran and India and the cultural and ethnic identity of the Dāsas" (*Studia Orientalia* 64, pp. 195–302. Helsinki 1988) was a fresh and important attempt to bring together the archaeological and philological evidence on this highly important and controversial subject.

However, it is not possible to discuss here all the interests of Professor Parpola. While I as a committed historian of learning have been discussing his past work, Asko himself is all the time going onwards, studying and absorbing every new find and interpretation into his own conception (see also the recent study "Sāvitri and resurrection", in *Changing Patterns of Family and Kinship in South*

*Asia*, *Studia Orientalia* 84, pp. 167–312. Helsinki 1998). And, in any case, a considerable part of his life's work, we hope, is still to come. In the field of Vedic studies in particular, his original favourite, there is no end to the material collected for publication and to the work to be done. It is a great pleasure and cause of considerable pride for me to be selected to write these lines to my esteemed colleague. We all wish him many more fruitful years in his chosen field.

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*Asko Heikki Siegfried Parpola* was born at Forssa on 12th July 1941 as the son of Aatto Kalervo Parpola and Taimi Mirjam, née Salonen. His father was a civil engineer, but his background was not devoid of interest in Asian matters. His maternal grandfather, Rev. Kaarlo Erkki Salonen (1883–1949), was a missionary in Japan for many years, and his uncle, Armas Salonen (1915–1981), was Professor of Assyriology at the University of Helsinki. His younger brother, Simo Parpola, became a noted Assyriologist and successor to Salonen at the University of Helsinki. At the Normal Lyceum of Helsinki, Asko received a traditional classical education, and after matriculation in 1959 he started his studies in Indology and Classics at the University of Helsinki. He received his Cand.phil. (M.A.) in 1963 and Lic.phil. in 1966 and completed his Ph.D. in 1968. In 1967–72, he worked as Research Fellow at the Centralinstitut for Nordisk Asienforskning in Copenhagen. The Docentship of Indology at the University of Helsinki was conferred on him in 1969 and the personal chair as Professor of Indology in 1981. In 1964, he married Marjatta Pirkko-Leena Ingervo, who, with their two daughters, Päivikki and Mette, certainly join us in congratulating Asko.