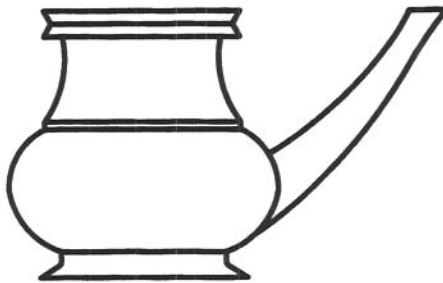


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Kerala Brahmins in Transition
A Study of a Nampūtiri Family

by
Marjatta Parpola



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PREFACE

I got my introduction to the Indian subcontinent in January-May 1971, when, together with our two daughters aged 5 and 2, I followed my Indologist husband Asko Parpola on his first field trip to that area. This experience made me radically change my future plans and I became a student of general ethnology and archaeology at the University of Helsinki. I started working in the ethnography section at the National Museum of Finland in 1974.

From 1971 to 1983, going to the field had to remain a dream for me for family and employment reasons. The support from the Academy of Finland for my husband's project 'Domestic rituals of the Jaiminīya Sāmaveda' included a grant for me to assist him in the field-work and in the arrangement of the field material in 1983 and 1985. I continued field study in 1990, 1992, and 1995-96, not assisting in that project any more, but concentrating on my own research. The Nordic Institute of Asian Studies financed my return air ticket to Kerala in 1990. I direct my thanks to these two institutions. However, I have done most of my research at home and in the field as a hobby during my annual leave and other leisure time without any financial help. For that reason my work has repeatedly had to remain dormant for long periods of time.

I wish to thank my husband for leading me to India and to my subject, and for his invaluable advice in questions of Indology. Likewise my Indian informants for their patience, hospitality, and their laborious attempts to satisfy my curiosity. I thank Matti Sarmela and Jukka Siikala for advice given in their seminars. I also owe thanks to Otso Kantokorpi, Petteri Koskikallio, Anna-Maria Viljanen, and Kaj Öhrnberg for their help in theoretical or practical problems. I thank Henri Schildt for measuring Raviguram and drawing its floor plan as well as the maps of Kerala, Michael Vollar for revising my English, and Juri Ahlfors, Päivikki Parpola and Pekka Jussila for advice in problems concerning computer technology.

My hearty thanks go to Pauline Kolenda for reading the manuscript for this publication, and for giving me many helpful suggestions concerning Indian anthropology and style of presentation. I also thank Karen Armstrong for reading the manuscript for my licentiate's dissertation and for giving valuable advice; Lea Shamgar-Handelman and Don Handelman for shaking off the dust from an early draft, and bringing it to active preparation by giving me useful suggestions; V. K. Ramachandran and Madhura Swaminathan for personal encouragement; and Valen-

tine Daniel, who looked at my field description in 1989, suggested some reading and assured me that the material could be used, apart from my museum work, for an independent study as well.

I know that I am not as deeply interested in a theoretical angle as my advisors might wish. None of these illustrious scholars are responsible for the shortcomings of the result.

Helsinki, in August 1999,

Marjatta Parpola

Note on orthography and transliteration

While speaking of pan-Indian matters, I have, as a rule, used the Sanskrit orthography for names of gods and other concepts, while the corresponding orthography of Malayalam, the language of Kerala, is used when speaking about specifically Kerala contexts. Generally, I have used the standard international transcription system in Indian terms and names. The English spelling is followed in geographical names, and Indian names and terms that have become current in English, and the names that Indian authors use of themselves. In citations the spelling chosen by the authors is often reproduced, but in other cases the international transcription is adopted for the sake of clarity.

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To Asko, Päivikki, Pekka and Mette