

M. Witzel

**F.J.B. KUIPER 1907-2003**

F.B.J. Kuiper, one of the last great Indologists of the past century and a founder of this journal, has left us a few months ago. His very innovative work covers virtually all the fields of Indo-Iranian and Indo-Aryan philology, linguistics, mythology and theater, as well as Indo-European, Dravidian, Munda and Pan-Indian linguistics.<sup>1</sup>

Much of his linguistic and philological work has been gathered in *Selected Writings on Indian Linguistics and Philology*,<sup>2</sup> his mythological work has been collected by his friend J. Irwin two decades ago as *Ancient Indian Cosmology*,<sup>3</sup> and his work on theater has been detailed in his book *Varuṇa and Vidūṣaka*.<sup>4</sup> These works provide a representative impression of his method and genius.

His full, wide ranging bibliography is available, up to 1968, in his Festschrift *Pratidānam*,<sup>5</sup> and from then onwards in various issues of this journal in ten year intervals.<sup>6</sup> To be added for the past few years are: *āpaśyam jāyām āmahīyamānām* (RV. IV.18.13c), *IJJ* 40, 103-113; Palinode: Avestan *naēdā*, *IJJ* 40, 1997, 115; A bilingual Ṛṣi. In: *Anusantatyai. Fs. für Johanna Narten zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. A. Hintze & E. Tichy. (Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft, Beihefte NF 19) Dettelbach: J.H. Röhl 2000, 157-160.

\*\*\*

Franciscus Jacobus Bernardus Kuiper was born on July 7, 1907 at 's Gravenhage (*Den Haag*, The Hague) in the Netherlands. He passed away quietly at Zeist in the morning of Nov. 14, 2003 and was buried at the Rijnhof cemetery at Leiden. He is survived by three sons, a daughter, and his grandchildren.

Kuiper spent his school years at the *gymnasium* at The Hague. He then studied

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the English translation of the introduction to T. Elizarenkova's essay *Trudy po vediskoi mifologii*: F.B.J. Kuiper, Fundamental Directions of his scholarly work, *Numen* XXXIV, 2, 1987, 145-178. This paper and my own introduction to Kuiper's *Selected Writings* (see n. 2) have been extensively used in the present sketch of Kuiper's life and work.

<sup>2</sup> F.B.J. Kuiper, *Selected Writings on Indian Linguistics and Philology*, ed. by A. Lubotsky, M.S. Oort, M. Witzel, Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi 1997; note the introduction to his work, pp. ix-xxvi.

<sup>3</sup> F.B.J. Kuiper, *Ancient Indian Cosmogony, Essays selected and introduced by John Irwin*, Delhi 1983. A detailed description of his work on mythology is found in T. Elizarenkova's Russian translation of his articles (*Trudy po vediskoi mifologii* [Studies on Vedic mythology], Moskva 1986 (see n.1).

<sup>4</sup> *Varuṇa and Vidūṣaka: on the origin of the Sanskrit drama*. Amsterdam/New York 1979

<sup>5</sup> *Pratidānam*, ed. by J.C. Heesterman *et al.* 1968.

<sup>6</sup> 1967-1976 in *IJJ* 19, 1977, 1-4; 1978-1987 in *IJJ* 30, 1987, 159-160, 1987-1996 in *IJJ* 40, 1997, 101-102.

Latin and Greek as well as Sanskrit and Indo-European linguistics at the University of Leiden. Towards the end of Willem Caland's life he also took private lessons from this great Vedic scholar at Caland's home in the Koningslaan at Utrecht. True to Caland's special interest, they read Brāhmaṇa and Sūtra texts. At Leiden his teachers included F. Muller and N. van Wijk.

In 1934 he completed his dissertation on the nasal presents in Sanskrit and other Indo-European languages (published in 1937). He then took a position as a high school teacher of Latin and Greek at the *lyceum* of Batavia (Jakarta) in Indonesia. The experience of a tropical, sometime Hindu-Buddhist country, has made a deep impression on him. However, he could not find a chance to visit India only much later. In 1939, he was appointed as Professor of Sanskrit at Leiden University. In May 1940 German troops occupied the Netherlands. Kuiper now had to work in relative isolation that was intensified when the University was subsequently closed; for several years academic work had to be done in seclusion. After liberation in May 1945, Academia slowly retraced its previous course, though in a somewhat different political and social atmosphere than before the war. Greater "reforms" were to come in the late Sixties and early Seventies. Many a professor became discouraged by the inherent unproductive loss of time and energy. Kuiper thus took early retirement at the age of 65, instead of the customary one. He was honored with a *Festschrift* by many of his colleagues in all the fields he had been working in (*Pratidānam*, ed. J.C. Heesterman *et al.*, 1968.)

Kuiper has, in my impression, enjoyed and *used* his retirement. The number and range of his publications after this date are greater in number and perhaps also in range than those he had published after his dissertation. Little involved anymore with University business, he enjoyed the contact with his friends, with members of his violin quartet, with his former pupils and his successors at Leiden, and with a stream of visiting colleagues.

During his years at Leiden University, Kuiper taught Sanskrit, Prakrit and Indo-European linguistics. He was very much admired and beloved by his many students who recall many stories about his dedicated teaching and impressive personality. Among his foremost pupils are the linguist R.S.P. Beekes, the Indologist G. Schokker, and the late Buddhist scholar J.W. de Jong.

He was a member of a number of scholarly societies and of the Royal Academy of Sciences at Amsterdam, and he was publicly honored by his native country in making him a Knight in the Order of the Netherlands Lion.

In 1957, Kuiper founded, together with de Jong, the *Indo-Iranian Journal*. He was its chief editor for the next quarter of a century, and remained involved in it as one of the editors and also by contributing many of his own articles. This journal was and to some extent still is the only truly international journal of Indological studies. Its foundation was a great step forwards, and right from its first number it carried articles by the foremost scholars of the day. To quote T. Elizarenkova, it is a journal "which united the best forces of scholars of different countries. It determined in many respects the course of studies in Indian and Iranian studies. The activity of Kuiper in this journal is uncommonly many-sided. He is not only the author of many articles, which have opened new perspectives for Indology, but also an active reviewer who quickly published his reactions to important Indological and Iranistical publications, a participant in different scholarly discussions."

F. B. J. Kuiper's earliest publications<sup>7</sup> deal with Indo-European grammar, notably with the verbs that show an *n*-infix in the present stem,<sup>8</sup> a rather uncharacteristic feature in Indo-European. As Kuiper remarks in his preface, "Die Ursache des alleinigen Vorkommens von Infixbildungen [im I.E.] bleibt nach wie vor ein ungelöstes Rätsel". He continued his interests in Indo-European throughout, though this only occasionally resulted in separate works, such as in a study of Homer.<sup>9</sup> The next group of problems tackled by him were the effects that the laryngeals had exerted on the Vedic phonological, nominal, and verbal system, including their Iranian analogs; this was followed by a study of their influence on Ṛgvedic *sandhi*. Like much of his work to follow this was very innovative as the laryngeal theory had not been accepted by many linguists then. Kuiper, however, could show how its application led to a revision of our picture of large sections of Indo-Iranian grammar. The laryngeal sounds of the Proto-Indo-European parent language have disappeared in nearly all Indo-European languages except for Hittite where  $h_2$  and  $h_3$  are retained. Nevertheless, they have left many traces in the various languages. In Vedic Sanskrit, they are most frequently represented by unexpected vowel lengthening (e.g. *viśvāvasu*), or by the 'extra' *i* of the *set* roots (as in *bhav-i-tum*, *bhav-i-ṣyati*).

Among Kuiper's early investigations on the laryngeals in Sanskrit was a study of Vedic nouns (*Notes on Vedic Noun Inflexion*, 1942). This was followed, after the war, by a study of those cases where laryngeals played a role in phonology and were of consequence in many of the verb forms and in word formation in general. (*Traces of laryngeals in Vedic Sanskrit*, 1947). The traces of laryngeals can also be noticed in some peculiarities of Ṛgvedic Sandhi (*Shortening of final vowels in the Rigveda* 1955). This shortening takes place only in certain positions and which had already become difficult to understand or were even incomprehensible to the Brāhmaṇa time redactors of the text (such as Śākalya).

These investigations naturally became, again in the words of Elizarenkova, "an integral part of comparative-historical study of the Indo-European languages and the successful application of the laryngeal theory to the materials of the Vedic language served as a stimulus for the study of traces of laryngeals also in other ancient languages: Greek (Cowgill), Hittite (Puhvel), Italic (Watkins), Germanic (Lehmann)." This evaluation can easily be applied to most of Kuiper's work in other areas as well. Kuiper's occupation with laryngeals has also influenced his pupil R. Beekes and much of Dutch Indo-European studies, and beyond.

He continued to write, occasionally, on the topic. For example, the brief note on *aja* indicates how linguistic and close philological study can aid in the interpretation of the Veda. The occurrences of the word *aja* in the RV have frequently been taken, ironically even many times after Kuiper's note, to mean *unborn* (next to the common meaning *goat*). Kuiper succinctly shows that the passages where *aja* has been supposed

<sup>7</sup> Zur Geschichte der indo-iranischen s-Präsentia, AO 12, 1934, 190-306.

<sup>8</sup> *Die indogermanischen Nasalpräsentia. Ein Versuch zu einer morphologischen Analyse.* Amsterdam 1937.

<sup>9</sup> *Nōropi khalkō*, MKNW, Amsterdam 1951, 201-227.

to mean 'unborn' are wrongly understood, and that the only correct interpretation is 'goat'. The root *jan* 'to give birth' is one with final laryngeal, in Pāṇini's terms a *seṭ* root, and the inflection of a supposed *aja-* 'unborn' should have indicated this. It does not, and all the theories built on this understanding of the word in the RV should finally and safely be put to rest.

Some of his linguistic articles bear on themes of Indian mythology and cosmology as well, though they mainly were intended as linguistic papers. Incidentally, this combination is quite typical for Kuiper's writing. It indicates what can be achieved if critical observation of the *minutiae* of linguistic theory and traditional philology, especially when this is combined with a study of *all* the Vedic texts available and with a well-founded and systematic investigation of Vedic religion. This is enhanced, in Kuiper's case, by his systematic approach, based on a comprehensive theory, a theory that takes into account both the *structure* of Vedic religion as well as its gradual historical development from the Ṛgveda to that of the Upaniṣads and Sūtras.

Examples include his treatment of *pārye divi* (III 5, 1962, 169-183) which means, in a cosmogonic sense, "on the following day of a new period" (and not "decisive moment" as in Geldner's RV translation); or *svarvṛṣṭi* (III 4, 1960, 59-63) which is determined as "spontaneous action"; or the important investigation of *vidatha* (*Ind. Taur.* 2, 1974, 121-132) "distribution of gifts" that aims at improving the social standing of the donor and of strengthening of his vital powers. This investigation is the key to the understanding of a large part of the Ṛgvedic social and religious structures.

In Kuiper's work such philological and linguistic investigations are combined with a magisterial view of the unique traits of Vedic and later Hindu religion, so much so that some reviewers, for example those of his book *Varuṇa and Vidūṣaka*, felt compelled to state that he had shown that nothing ever had really changed in the period from the Ṛgveda to the Epic and later Hindu texts. This, of course, does injustice to Kuiper's intention and to the actual execution of his research plans, with its great attention to *historical* detail.

The Iranian languages and religions are closely related to those of early India. In this field as well, Kuiper has been fascinated by mythology, and again, many of his observations take their origin in minute philological and linguistic observations, as in his articles on *Mazdā* or *Ahura Mazdā*. He analyzed the word *mazdā* (III 1, 1957, 86-95) which is part of the name of the highest god, *ahura mazdā*, *mazdā ahura*, making use of the laryngeal theory, and concluded that it means "wise". The declension of Ahura Mazdā makes it East Iranian, and this is a proof of a spread of the Zoroastrian faith from Eastern towards Western Iran. The two, originally separate epithets were joined only under the Achaemenids as *ahuramazda-* (III 18, 1976, 25-42) which puts Zoroaster's date long before that of the reign of Cyrus, i.e. more towards the beginning of the first millennium B.C.<sup>10</sup> than to the middle of the sixth century as Henning had thought. In Zaratūstra's time, East Iranian already was sharply differentiated from Western

---

<sup>10</sup> "... how wide a gap separates the Vulgate from Zarathustra's language." (Kuiper, *On Zarathustra's Language*, Amsterdam 1978: 8)

Iranian.<sup>11</sup>

Zoroaster's language,<sup>12</sup> has absorbed many traits from other sources; it is to some extent an artificial language, a *Kunstsprache*, elements of which often are older than the language of the RV. This fact may be explained by a certain amount of conservatism of the sacred language in Iran, which shows some though comparatively less impact of the substrate languages -- a still unstudied problem--<sup>13</sup> than that exerted on the language and culture of the R̥gvedic Indo-Aryans in the Panjab. In northwest India the early Vedic immigrant clans and tribes (including their poets) were struggling with each other and with the more numerous local population of non-Aryan descent, which belonged to the post-Indus civilizations (c. 1900 B.C. and later). In Greater Iran, however, the local population, for example that of the Mundigak or of the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex (late 3rd/early 2nd mill. BCE), does not seem to have influenced the Iranian offshoot of Indo-Iranian to the same extent that the indigenous languages affected Vedic and other Old Indo-Aryan dialects in the Panjab and beyond.<sup>14</sup>

Another group of Kuiper's studies deals with specific questions of Dravidian and other pre-Indo-European languages of the subcontinent. Kuiper is one of the few Indologists who excelled with his knowledge of all of the major Indian language families. His work in Dravidian linguistics includes such topics as the periodization of some sound changes in Dravidian, the correlation of voiced and unvoiced consonants at the beginning of words and their loans into Sanskrit:<sup>15</sup> or the phonology and morphology of Old Tamil (the *āytam* problem),<sup>16</sup> or on formation of an epenthetic *-i* when two nominal bases join,<sup>17</sup> as well as some problems of morphology.<sup>18</sup>

The other great non-Indo-European linguistic family of the subcontinent, Munda, is dealt with in many of F.B.J. Kuiper's studies. His interest in Munda was

---

<sup>11</sup> Kuiper, Old East Iranian dialects, *IJ* 18, 1976, 241-253 and: Old East Iranian *\*nāmani* "names", etc., *IJ* 20 (1978) 83-94.

<sup>12</sup> Kuiper, *On Zarathustra's language*, Amsterdam 1978.

<sup>13</sup> However, see now: Witzel, Linguistic Evidence for Cultural Exchange in Prehistoric Western Central Asia. In: V. Mair (ed.), *Contact and Exchange in the Ancient World. [Proceedings of a conference held at Philadelphia on May 5-6, 2001]*, and in *Sino-Platonic Papers*, 129, Dec. 2003.

<sup>14</sup> This question, especially its Iranian aspect, is in need of much closer study; see summaries by Witzel in: *Mother Tongue*, Oct. 1999, and *Sino-Platonic Papers* 129, A. Lubotsky in: C. Carpelan *et al.* *Early contacts between Uralic and Indo-European*. Helsinki 2001, 301-317.

<sup>15</sup> Zur Chronologie des Stimmtonverlusts im dravidischen Anlaut (skt. *kuṇḍa-m*, *kuṭīcaka-ḥ*, *gola-ḥ*), *BSOA* 9 (1939), 987-1001.

<sup>16</sup> A. Chandrashekar, The *āytam* problem reexamined, *Ind. Ling.* 34, 1973, 211-216, and Kuiper, The *āytam* problem, *Ind. Ling.* 35, 1974, 205-217.

<sup>17</sup> Two problems of Tamil phonology, *IJ* 2, 1958, 191-224.

<sup>18</sup> Note on Dravidian morphology, *AO* 20, 1948, 238-252.

certainly kindled by his long stay in Indonesia. He published a study on the relationship between the Munda and Indonesian languages (*Or. Neerl.*, Leiden 1948, 372-401) where he correctly pointed out that Munda is related to Malayo-Polynesian<sup>19</sup> -- now an accepted, though sometimes still controversial feature of Asian linguistics: Austro-Asiatic (Munda, Mon-Khmer, etc.) is related to Austronesian (Malayo-Polynesian), while the whole family, now called Austric, is now thought to include some other South-East Asian languages, such as Thai, Vietnamese or Miao, as well.

Among his early studies in Munda are his investigation into consonant variation, which makes linguistic comparison difficult (*Lingua* 14, 1965, 54-87 and *Proto-Munda words in Sanskrit*, 1948). However, we know of the Munda languages only for the past 100 or 150 years and from often imperfect phonetic transcriptions. It was necessary for Kuiper to study closely the phonetic, phonematic and structural facts of the various Munda languages and dialects, before he could begin to use this rather late material for a comparison with Vedic and classical Sanskrit in order to study Munda loan words in these early texts. This, he has carried out especially in his *Proto-Munda words in Sanskrit* (1948) and his study of RV loan words in the Fs. Kirfel (1955) and, more recently, in his great summary *Aryans in the R̥gveda*, 1991.

In his old age he has revoked, again typical of his magnanimous style,<sup>20</sup> some of the theories of his early Munda work (notably, of *Proto-Munda Words* of 1948 and of *Austro-Asiatic myth in the R̥gveda*, 1950). However, in a conversation some six years ago, he told me, on my insistence on the sheer usefulness of his early Munda work, that it should only be used by specialists, but not by the general scholarly public. Similarly, I think that his basic theory of the Emuṣa myth in the R̥gveda as being a local (substrate) adaptation of the Ir. Vala myth still holds (Witzel, *MT*, Oct. 1999) and that just the description as Munda would have to be modified.

At any rate, it must be remembered that these early works on Austro-Asiatic were written when no reliable reconstruction of Proto-Munda was available. In fact, Munda studies have been held up for decades by the reluctance of Munda specialists to publish their results (beyond Pinnow's comparative grammar<sup>21</sup> in 1959 and Zide's brief summary of 1969).<sup>22</sup> It will be only after the publication of such comprehensive materials that a renewed investigation of (Proto-)Munda words in Vedic and in later Skt. can be carried out with profit, and its impact on the RV can be gauged with more certainty. Only then, Proto-Austro-Asiatic can be used to clarify the remaining

<sup>19</sup> See H.J. Pinnow, The position of the Munda languages within the Austro-Asiatic language family, *Linguistic Comparison in South East Asia and the Pacific*, ed. H.L. Shorto, London: SOAS 1963, 140-152; N.H. Zide, Munda and Non-Munda Austroasiatic Languages, *Current Trends in Linguistics*, ed. Th. A. Sebeok, The Hague 1969, vol. 5, 411-430.

<sup>20</sup> See Kuiper, *Aryans in the R̥gveda*, Amsterdam 1991, introduction.

<sup>21</sup> H. J. Pinnow, *Versuch einer historischen Lautlehre der Kharia Sprache*, Wiesbaden 1959.

<sup>22</sup> The 2001 Harvard Central and South Asian Round Table (<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~sanskrit/RoundTableSchedule.html>) had a special para-session on Munda; the first results of such renewed cooperation are becoming visible now. G. Andersen has written a sketch of comparative Munda grammar and D. Stampe (<http://www.ling.hawaii.edu/faculty/stampe/aa.html>) has proposed and largely completed a comparative dictionary.

"uncertain" etymologies in Vedic, as M. Mayrhofer calls them, especially those that clearly show Austro-Asiatic-like prefixes (often more like those of Khasi; see Witzel, *MT* Oct. 1999).

In his Pan-Indian studies Kuiper treats the languages of the South Asian subcontinent as a linguistic area or *Sprachbund*.<sup>23</sup> This was the programmatic title of one of his articles, *The genesis of a linguistic area* (*IJ* 10 (1967): 81 sqq. The concept had been developed in the studies of the Balkan area, where languages belonging to four or five different linguistic families have been in close contact over the past few millennia and have greatly influenced each other by *calque* type borrowing. Similar developments can be detected in the Indian subcontinent.

Kuiper first studied borrowings from the non-Indo-European languages of the Indian subcontinent into Vedic and classical Sanskrit. Already in 1939 he published an article in which he compared the two Vedic words *ṣṛbinda* and *binda*. They show the typical Munda prefixes, found in such words as *Kaliṅga*, *T(r)iliṅga*, etc. Kuiper continued to study such loans in a number of articles<sup>24</sup> and in his recent book *Aryans in the R̥gveda* (1991). The earliest traces of the mutual influence of the major language families of the subcontinent are apparent even in the oldest Indian text itself, the *Ṛgveda*. The early influence of Dravidian and Munda on Vedic Sanskrit is elaborately shown in Kuiper's study *R̥gvedic loanwords* in *Fs. Kirfel* (1955). The trend continued: about 100 Sanskrit and Prakrit words were borrowed into Sanskrit from early Austro-Asiatic (*Proto-Munda words in Sanskrit*, Amsterdam 1948). The appearance of the *Emuṣa motif* in the RV (*An Austro-Asiatic myth in the R̥gveda* 1950) clearly points to a very early local influence even on the mythology of the RV. As mentioned, Kuiper has returned to the topic of loan words in the Vedic texts in his last book, *Aryans in the R̥gveda*, where the evidence has been re-evaluated after some 40 years that have seen a dramatic development in Dravidian and also in Munda studies. His list still encompasses some 380 loan words in the *Ṛgveda*, some 4% of RV vocabulary. Apart from the expected reservoir of local words for flora and fauna, many loan words come from agriculture (due to the Aryan predilection for pastoralism), from music, and from the folk level of religion, the *Little Tradition*. His study of the linguistic structure of these 380 loans clearly indicates non-IA features in phonology, word formation, and etymology. Some have tried to whittle down the list (or, completely unreasonably, even to deny *any* 'foreign' words in the RV), but even when taking the low count of Th. Oberlies (*IJ* 37, 1994, 333-349), some 2% of the RV words remain unexplainable as IE/Ir. Better comparative dictionaries of Dravidian, Munda, etc. will help us to decide on them in the future.

His studies on Nahali,<sup>25</sup> a small tribal language in Central India, provide much

<sup>23</sup> Cf. R. Jakobson. Über die phonologischen Sprachbünde. *Selected Writings*, The Hague 1962, I: 137-143.

<sup>24</sup> Two *R̥gvedic loanwords*, *Fs. Debrunner*, Bern 1954, 241-250; *R̥gvedic loanwords*, *Fs. Kirfel*, Bonn 1955, 137-185; *śailuṣa-* and *Kuśilava-*, *Fs. Brandenstein*, Innsbruck 1968, 77-84.

<sup>25</sup> *Nahali. A comparative study*, Amsterdam 1962; The sources of Nahali vocabulary. In: H. Zide. *Studies in contemporary Austroasiatic Linguistics*. The Hague 1966, 96-192.

of the background and evidence. In Nahali, presently appearing as an Indo-Aryan language, there is a Dravidian, and below that a Munda substrate; below all of them, c. 25% of Nahali vocabulary are not related to any other Indian language. This Proto-Nahali therefore is an example of the oldest Indian substrates; they are rarely directly attested and even less studied in its vestiges found in various modern and ancient languages of India, as Kuiper has also stressed, in the context of loans in Vedic: "Many, indeed, may derive from different but unknown sources." (*Fs. Kirfel*, 137, 149, *Aryans in the Rigveda*, 1). The earliest substrate of Nahali, therefore, comes from a time when none of the three major language groups existed in the Proto-Nahali area. Therefore, this is one of the "original" languages spoken in the subcontinent, next to Proto-Burushaski in the Western Himalayas, Proto-Kusunda in the Nepal Himalayas, Proto-Andamanese, the substrate of Tharu in the Indian and Nepalese Tarai, Masica's "Language X" in the Hindi area, or the substrate of the Vedda language in Sri Lanka. Theoretically, most of them and "Para-Munda" (Witzel, *Mother Tongue*, Oct. 1999) could be the language(s) of the Indus civilization.

Kuiper's investigation of the Indian linguistic area has been seminal for the research of the past few decades. However, it is remarkable that many Indo-Europeanists still overlook these facts and try to etymologize most Vedic words as Indo-European. Designations of flora and fauna can be expected to be local words, to be new formations, or simply to be transferals of a known species to a related one. For example, *mṛga*, Avestan *mərəga*, originally "wild animal," came to denote the (black) antelope. A new coinage is *hastin* "the one with the hand", the elephant. In most cases, however, a local name was taken over into OIA, such as the word for the tiger while the Indo-Iranian and Paleo-Central Asian word (*pr̥dāku*, \**pard/pand*, see *Sino-Platonic Papers*, Dec. 2003) was forgotten. The high number of clearly non-Indo-European words, even in a hieratic text such as the RV, remains surprising. The early Indo-Aryans obviously moved into an area with a strong local population of speakers of (Para-)Munda and of other non-IE languages.

Close observation of the various Indian substrates can also lead to wide-ranging comparisons, such as that of some words in Proto-Nahali and in Ainu, an early intuition of Kuiper that has been further substantiated now.<sup>26</sup> These groups of peoples seem to belong to the earliest settlements of the subcontinent by *Homo Sapiens sapiens* on his way out of Africa to E. Asia and Australia.<sup>27</sup>

The details of the interaction between IA and other languages are indicated in Kuiper's article on the genesis of the South Asian linguistic area. He traces the influence of the substratum in the use of *iti* or in the two forms of the *gerund* (which is based, according to Kuiper, on a Dravidian calque). This presupposes a long time of "subliterary" usage --the *tu*- stem that is used in the Absolutive is rather archaic even in the RV-- until these forms crept into and were accepted by the high language. The same applies to the spread of the so-called *cerebrals* (*mūrdhanya*), that is the retroflex

<sup>26</sup> Kuiper, Nahali 1961, 44; see now *Mother Tongue* II: 51 sqq., III: 5, IV: 100 sqq., and note the early spread of the Y chromosome (IV) from the Near East via India to Japan.

<sup>27</sup> Note: Spencer Wells, paper at the 15th ICAES (Florence, July 5th - 12th 2003: *Genomic Footprints of Humans in Asia and Eurasia*): "The Eurasian heartland: Central Asia in Eurasian prehistory".

sounds such as *t*, *d*, *ṇ*. Importantly, every population that has entered the subcontinent from the west was influenced by this feature, even Pashto and Baluchi, whose speakers arrived only about one thousand years ago. Kuiper concludes that "between the arrival of the Aryans ... and the formation of the oldest hymns of the RV a much longer period must have elapsed than is normally thought."

This is now substantiated by Archaeological and further linguistic evidence. The Indus civilization disintegrated, somewhat in the fashion of the Maya civilization, at c. 1900 B.C., and its population reverted to village level cultures, keeping many of its traditions alive though not the Indus signs. The Indo-Aryan texts do not mention any of the five or six larger or the many smaller cities of the Indus civilization, except as ruins. Even the earliest R̥gvedic hymns must therefore be later than 1900 B.C. and are now datable more securely to c. 1400 BCE at the earliest. There are some feature in the OIA of the Mitanni documents that precede the language of the RV: *žh* > RV *h*, *az* > RV *e*, *ai* > RV *e*. Though the speed of language change cannot be gauged, the language of the RV remains a form of OIA that must be *somewhat* later than the period of the Mitanni documents (c. 1450-1350 B.C.) In addition, the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex whose language had seriously influenced pre-OIA<sup>28</sup> when they passed through, came to an end by 1600 B.C. Pre-R̥gvedic thus must have spread from the BMAC area via the Hindukush civilization to the western Panjab (Gandhāra) between c. 1600 and 1400 B.C. or even somewhat later. For, the core of the RV covers merely a span of some five generations that saw constant warfare between the Pūru and Bharata tribes but even the late hymns are earlier than the introduction of iron (first mentioned in the Atharvaveda) at c. 1000 B.C. This leaves a theoretical, maximum time span for the composition of R̥gvedic hymns of up to 900 years, while in view of the Mitanni data, some 2-300 years is perhaps more likely.

This long period of acculturation can be noticed, as Kuiper has pointed out, also in the appearance of "Aryan" kings with non-Aryan names, such as *Balbūtha* and *Bṛbu*, which is just one of the many features that point to a rather close relationship between immigrating Indo-Aryans and the slowly "Aryanizing" local population. It did not only take over just the language of the newly arrived pastoral elite but also its culture, including the new technology of the Vedic "tank", the horse-drawn chariot, which was used in sport and battle. In Kuiper's words, "as a sociological term 'Aryan' denotes all those who took part in the sacrifices and festivals."<sup>29</sup> The early RV period of a fairly "liberal" and wide-spread acculturation came to an end when the system of four classes (*varṇa*) was established in the late RV Puruṣa hymn, the "first constitution of India" (P. Mus). This development was followed by a systematic "First Sanskritization" under the Kurus and their king Parikṣit, flourishing at time of the introduction of iron at about 1000 B.C.

Again, Kuiper's early intuition and his detailed subsequent research, in the articles mentioned and already summarized in the *Festschrift Kirfel* (1955), has been the correct one. We have to reckon with an extended "R̥gvedic" period (1600?/1400-1000 BCE), with multiple processes of cultural, social and linguistic acculturation and with

<sup>28</sup> See n. 14.: Witzel in: *Mother Tongue*, Oct. 1999, *Sino-Platonic Papers* 129, A. Lubotsky in: C. Carpelan *et al.* *Early contacts between Uralic and Indo-European*. Helsinki 2001, 301-317.

<sup>29</sup> *Aryans in the Rigveda*, 1991, 96.

constant interaction between the newly arrived speakers of Indo-Aryan --already much influenced by the BMAC and Hindukush cultures-- and the local South Asian populations. Much of this is, as Kuiper has shown consistently, even visible in the hieratic R̥gvedic hymns, whose composition and transmission was restricted to traditional, rather conservative clans of poets and priests.

\*\*\*

Kuiper's keen eye for the systems underlying the multitude of facts to be studied, which has been seen in his linguistic investigations, is in clearly in evidence in his study of myth as well. This feature has long been overlooked or simply been denied (and in fact sometime still is) by those who cannot see the wood for all of the individual, albeit fascinating trees. Like mythologies everywhere else, Vedic mythology follows a clear 'plan' (which does not mean that all its historically developed features must fit it, for which see below).

Unlike the disparate naturalistic explanations of myths and deities offered around the turn of the 20th century, and differently from the socially interested French tradition (Durkheim, Dumézil), Kuiper does not only want to see religion as a mere reflection or *Überbau* of nature or society. Instead, he stressed the underlying, unifying features, especially that of cosmogony. For Kuiper the underlying pattern of IIr and Indian mythology rather was that of IIr of creation myths, of cosmogony, which are in evidence also in Vedic ritual and in the origin of Indian theater (see below), in later Hindu myth (such as the churning of the ocean), and I may add, still decodable even in modern festivals such as the New Year festival in Nepal or that of the last pagans of the Hindukush, the Kalasha.<sup>30</sup> In short, Kuiper aims at a systematic and structural (though not a structuralist!) reconstruction and explanation of IIr mythology.

For him, the main IIr myth was the slaying of the dragon Vṛtra "resistance" by Indra Vṛtrahan, which initiated the emergence of the present universe through the destruction of the inert chaos of the primordial world, the primordial hill floating on the (salty) waters. In brief outline, this process can be described as follows. In the primordial world a clod of earth arises from the primordial ocean, either by a consolidation of the waters, or in the form of a world egg with a golden embryo.<sup>31</sup> The origin of the primordial world is unclear, and apparently without a creator. The R̥gvedic poets like to speculate about it and offer several theories (which are, in contrast to common perceptions, all very old as they are already found all over Eurasian mythologies, where they go back to the Paleolithic): the creation from chaos or darkness, the primordial waters, an egg, or a giant. The primordial earth is unstable, floats on the waters, spreads and becomes a hill which contains a number of deities:

---

<sup>30</sup> See Witzel, *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, 1, 1998, 501-53, The R̥gvedic Religious System and its Central Asian and Hindukush Antecedents. In: *The Vedas: Texts, Language and Ritual*, ed. A. Griffiths & J.E.M. Houben. Groningen [2004]

<sup>31</sup> In N. Asia and N. America, a bird (or musk rat) dives into the primordial ocean to bring up the earth in its beak (or mouth); it often also makes the still shaky earth firm by beating it with its wings. Only in South Asia this is done by the boar, Emuṣa, later on an incarnation of Viṣṇu who performs this primordial act. Note his role as god of the center, see Kuiper, *The three strides of Viṣṇu* (1962, repr. in: *Ancient Indian Cosmogony*, 1983, 41-55).

fire/light, (sweet) water/Soma, as well as the Asuras deities such as Varuṇa. Into this still undifferentiated world, that had neither heaven/earth nor darkness/day, suddenly Indra is born, "one does not know from where." He becomes the demiurge who establishes, by two sets of actions, the present dual world with light/darkness, life/death, good/evil.

One is his splitting apart Heaven and Earth who were joined, Heaven lying on Earth, and his pushing up Heaven. This also creates the dichotomy of the current deities, the Devas and Asuras. The unstable earth now is fixed to the rock bottom from where it arose. Varuṇa, originally the god of the primordial ocean, becomes the guardian of Ṛta, by which *active power of truth* ("*Wahrheitsverwirklichung*", M.W.) the present world keeps functioning. Varuṇa now resides in the Netherworld (which is perhaps better defined a lower level of Earth, see below). In the act of stemming up Heaven, Indra is identified with the cosmic pillar (or world tree), extending upwards through the night time north pole. However Kuiper does not see Indra as a true god of the Center which rather is occupied by Viṣṇu (as he explains in his article "The three strides of Viṣṇu" (repr. in: *Ancient Indian Cosmogony*, 1983, 41-55). Rather, he is so only at the mythical moment of cosmogony and at its yearly re-enactment of raising Indra's pillar at New Year. Indra and his friend, Viṣṇu, also act together in the slaying of Vṛtra and the opening of the Vala cave. After the creation of the dual world, Viṣṇu takes his third, mysterious step beyond Heaven establishing, according to Kuiper, the totality of the universe.

The other aspect of Indra's creation is his overcoming of Vṛtra, originally "resistance", but imagined in Iir. (and also in Indo-European and Eurasian) tradition as a dragon or as a giant snake, lying on the primordial mountain. Indra also splits the mountain with his *vajra* and obtains the goods contained in the cave that make it possible for the world to become an *oikumene*, and continue to function. This is told in great detail in another (Eurasian) myth, that of the opening of the Vala (Iran. *Vara*, the Nuristani 'corn house', Slav. *Volos/Veles*', Lithuanian *Vėlnias*, Japanese *Iwato*) and of the releasing the light in the form of Uṣas, the First Dawn.<sup>32</sup> Kuiper maintains that both acts (Vṛtra and Vala) cannot be separated: "from a mythological point of view this second act cannot be separated from the first." However, these two myths rather seem to be but two stages in cosmogony than variants of one myth. (Incidentally, both are represented by two stages in the Soma ritual, the morning and midday pressings, representing Spring and Summer, see H.-P. Schmidt, *Bṛhaspati und Indra*, 1986).

The primordial deities, the Asura, who became opposed to the Devas, their younger brothers, after the dual cosmos had been established. According to Kuiper, some of the Asura went over to the party of the Deva-Asuras, most notably Varuṇa, while others became the Asuric non-Devas (*adeva*), who were chased away beyond the limits of the *oikumene*. However, Varuṇa remains an ambiguous figure, for even as a

---

<sup>32</sup> Note also, due to the Iir. identification of fire and light/sun, Kuiper, "An Indian Prometheus?" according to which Mātariśvan stole fire for the gods (*devebhyaḥ* RV 3.9.5, just like the eagle stole Soma), not "from the gods" as in Greek myth. Incidentally, the old etymology of Mātariśvan as "swelling in his mother" is supported by the related Japanese myth of the fire god, born from Izanami and killing her in the process (*Kojiki* 1.7.22, cf. *Mother Tongue* VI, 2001, 45-62, n.20). --- On Vṛtra/Vala etc. and Slavic cf. V.N. Toporov, Parallels to ancient Indo-Iranian social and mythological concepts, *Pratidanam*, 108-120) (= *mir/mitra*; *vrtra* ~ *Usyn'a*, snake, *verto-vernī-*, *Voron?*, etc).

Deva and guardian of Ṛta, he retains secret relations with the Asura and as king of the waters with the ocean. This is observable at year end when he becomes dangerous and acts, at this dissolution of time, space and society, again as an opponent of Indra.

This aspect of Varuṇa is embodied in the --always conservative-- ritual. Kuiper views large parts of it, especially the Vedic Soma and Mahāvratā rituals, as a reciprocation of Indra's primordial actions. Cosmogonic myth thus is the prototype of the yearly renewal of life.<sup>33</sup> The splitting of the Vala and the release of light is a repetition of the primordial release of light (Uṣas) *in illo tempore*. After winter solstice, the sun returns with the appearance of the first sunrise at New Year. This cosmogonic myth is a charter myth at the same time, as is seen clearly in the Mahāvratā, where we have sympathetic magic (shooting at a white skin, symbol of the sun, and nudging it on, chariot races as an imitation the difficult turn of the sun around the bend at winter solstice) but also the contest between the Devas and Asuras which is repeated on the contemporary social level as one between the Brahmin and the Śūdra, or between the Brahmācārin and the village prostitute). Indra's cosmogonic act of pushing up Heaven and his momentarily becoming the cosmic pillar, are repeated by the erection of Indra's pillar.<sup>34</sup> Indra clearly is a seasonal god in such contexts.<sup>35</sup>

The Iṛ. new year rituals are also accompanied by verbal contests. In his article *The ancient Aryan verbal contest* (IJ 4, 217-281) Kuiper has studied them in their Iranian form involving *vyāxman* 'ritual meeting,' with *vyāxana* exchanges that are 'eloquent' < \**vi-yak* "to declare solemnly," and their Ṛgvedic form, called *vi-vāc*, a ritual verbal duel. Other contests include those, already mentioned, between sections of society, chariot races, but also distributions of wealth.<sup>36</sup> They take the form of *potlatch* type rituals by which wealthy donors, *maghāvan*, establish their social position and increase their prestige within the tribe and beyond, as they still do today among the Kalasha.<sup>37</sup> In doing so, humans can impersonate the deities in ritual:<sup>38</sup> in the RV both

---

<sup>33</sup> Cf. also Kuiper's papers on prenatal experience (see final footnote, below).

<sup>34</sup> Which is only a temporary prop and is discarded after the festival -- as it still is in modern Nepal, where many aspects of the ancient New Year festival are kept, albeit often in a reinterpreted medieval Hindu form (Witzel, *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, 1.3, Dec. 1998, 501-53); still older forms are found in the Hindukush with the Kalasha (Witzel in: A. Griffiths & J.E.M. Houben. *The Vedas: Texts, Language and Ritual*. Groningen 2004).

<sup>35</sup> In later India, the RV New Year ritual and myth detail the destruction of the universe, when Viṣṇu sleeps on the serpent floating on ocean, the lotus stalk emerging from his navel foreshadowing a new world pillar (cf. Witzel, *Prajātantu. Harānandalaharī*, Fs. M. Hara. Reinbek 2000, 457-480).

<sup>36</sup> Echoing the happenings at the time of creation: for example, the use of formulated speech and sympathetic noise at the splitting of the *Vala* (or Japanese *Iwato*, *Kojiki* 1.17); the custom is still seen in the dichotomic New Year chants of the Kalash, when Indra appears as Balumain, a *marebito* style visitor god, and when society is re-established, to the accompaniment of songs and dances, many of them of sexual character just as in the Mahāvratā ritual (and, it may be added, in RV 10.86). Ritual even replicates primordial intercourse by that of the village prostitute and the Magadha man.

<sup>37</sup> Similar rituals are still being performed by the only IA group that has not been included in the Vedic/Hindu belief systems, the Kalasha of the westernmost valleys of Chitral in NW Pakistan as well

the ordinary donors and Indra are called *maghavan*.<sup>39</sup> Kuiper's seminal papers on cosmogony and contests were published between 1960-1975, well before a more accessible description of Hindukush ethnological materials became available (Jettmar 1975). His remarkable insight is evident in the fact that his reconstruction of IIR religion still fits the structure of these scanty remnants of ancient IIR religion so well. However, the new data have not yet found much resonance among Vedic specialists.<sup>40</sup>

Kuiper's study of IIR. mythology and ritual also presented him with a link to the explanation of Indian theater, to which he then turned (at the 37th Intl. Congr. of Orientalists, Ann Arbor, 1971; *Varuṇa and Vidūṣaka*, 1979). Wide-reaching similarities and congruences are indeed visible. In the Nāṭyaśāstra, the Ṛgvedic creation myth is retold. Indra's pillar is erected, as a bamboo pole, by the Sūtradhāra and his helpers who represent Indra and Varuṇa: one carries the pole, the other one the golden pitcher (of Varuṇa and the Sūtradhāra walking between them symbolizes the center as Brahma, takes away the pole and becomes the world tree. The theater, thus consecrated, represents the universe, with the *jarjara* pole at the center, Indra and Varuṇa next to it; the jar is broken and (sweet) water flows out (as in the Mahāvratā),<sup>41</sup> a lamp is put down with a crash, which repeats the release of water and of light in the creation myth; a battle takes place, accompanied by music as to appease Asuras and Devas. In sum: Sūtradhāra = Brahma, the helpers = Indra and Varuṇa = the *nayaka* 'hero' and the *vidūṣaka*.

In the *trigata* conversation between the three, the hero is constantly echoed by the *vidūṣaka* with incomprehensible, foolish, and indecent talk, a reflection of the Vedic *vivāc*, like that of Varuṇa and Indra in RV 4.42; we may also compare ritualistic verbal exchange between the Ārya and the Śūdra in the Mahāvratā, where the Śūdra is habitually beaten up.<sup>42</sup> The *vidūṣaka* "corrupter" thus is always defeated, takes on the blame, and becomes a scapegoat (cf. RV 10.86, where I believe Vṛṣākapi takes this role). The *vidūṣaka* is described as a bald, hunchbacked, lame dwarf, with yellow eyes and

---

as, at least until the conquest by the King of Afghanistan in 1895, also by the third IIR. group, the Kafirs (Nuristani) in northeastern Afghanistan.

<sup>38</sup> And among the Kalasha, where children impersonate the ancestors; cf. H. Falk, *Bruderschaft und Würfelspiel*, 1986.

<sup>39</sup> Among the Kafirs and Kalasha, there are several ranks of donors; the most liberal ones of them received wooden statues after their death: they ride on (the rare) horses, just like the gods.

<sup>40</sup> See, however, for G. Buddruss. Zur Mythologie der Prasun-Kafiren. *Paideuma* 7, 1960; Vom mythischen Weltbild eines Hochgebirgsvolkes im Hindukush. In: D. Zeller, *Religion und Weltbild*. Marburger Religionsgeschichtliche Beiträge 2, 117-134; Witzel in: A. Griffiths & J.E.M. Houben. *The Vedas: Texts, Language and Ritual*. Groningen 2004.

<sup>41</sup> In myth, this act is seen in the image of the 'Heavenly Bucket' (Kuiper in: *Asia Maior*, Fs. Gonda, 1972, 144-156, Witzel, *StII 20/EJVS* 1): the gods draw water in a vessel, then overturn it, and water pours down from the Great Dipper (*ursa maior*), at night when the netherworld is turned upside down above the world, or in form of rain.

<sup>42</sup> Originally the friendship between the Sūtradhāra and the Vidūṣaka was a contest, like that of Indra and Varuṇa, and the hero of the drama must thus be understood in his correlation with the Vidūṣaka.

protruding teeth and distorted features, a funny gait, and uttering incoherent talk; this agrees with the description of the *Jumbaka* in the *Aśvamedha*, on whose head an offering is made and who represents *Varuṇa*. In sum: *Vidūṣaka* = *Brahman* = *Jumbaka* = *Varuṇa*. In sum, all of this is a repetition of the creation myth; ritual, mythology and drama are congruent, and the *Nāṭyaśāstra* tale about the origin of the drama represents just another, if later, version of the basic Vedic myth.

However, as is typical for all living religions and mythologies, Kuiper knows that RV myth is "not entirely consistent" (as it has a long prehistory and as it underwent contemporary influences in the Greater Panjab).<sup>43</sup> For example, *sat* "being" arises after *asat* "non-being" but both also co-exist, and, transcending both, there is the "highest step of *Viṣṇu*," a synthesis of the duality of the present world.

Death and afterlife are rarely mentioned in the RV, but we may obtain a glimpse of the eschatological beliefs in Kuiper's study "Bliss of *Aśa*" where the location of "Aśa with light" (Y 30.1) is explained. According to the Iir. cosmological scheme of Iir cosmogony, *Varuṇa*'s realm is his stone house in the netherworld, together with *Yama*, *Uṣas* and *Agni*, where *Ṛta* is hidden, and from where *Uṣas* having returned underground to the east, rises again each morning. In Iir. religion, the Sun is a form of *Agni* who is born "from waters, from the stone." At night, however, the netherworld is positioned, as the nocturnal sky, high above the earth, and the subterranean waters have become the heavenly ocean. *Varuṇa* of the stone house now is the god of night time sky, with the world tree hanging upside down from the zenith.<sup>44</sup> The secret light in the netherworld, the birth of *Agni* (= light) from the rock, and the vision of light in darkness are some of the basic Iir. mythical concepts. Kuiper finds in them a *mythological parallel* of the opening of the primordial hill and of the opening of the mind of the poet, experienced by *Zarathustra* and *Vasiṣṭha* both in their own ways, as a passive reflective one in the case of *Vasiṣṭha* and a socially active one in that of *Zarathustra*.

In sum, Kuiper's mythological work is sustained and counterchecked by a coherent theory, one that has great similarity in other IE cultures (Slavic *Perun'*/*Volos*, Lith. *Perkunas*/*Vėlnias*, Germanic *Aesir*/*Vanir*, and I may add, with Eurasian mythology, e.g., the Japanese *Ama.no Kami*/*Tsuchi.no Kami*). Kuiper, however, refrained from such wide ranging comparisons, as he wanted to firmly establish the Vedic and Iranian version first, as he once told me. However, he has pointed to similar concepts found in old Egypt, with the *Dayak* of Borneo and in the *potlatch* rituals of the northwest coast Amerindians.<sup>45</sup> As the RV, next to the Egyptian pyramid texts and

---

<sup>43</sup> There also are other inconsistencies, unavoidable due to the stage-wise adaptation of BMAC, Hindukush, Gandhara, and Indus motifs into Vedic religion (cf. Witzel, op cit. 2004); in addition there are latent inner-Vedic developments.

<sup>44</sup> An old idea, cf. Witzel, *Sur le chemin du ciel*, *BEI* 2, 1984, n. 103); the Indo-Eur. oak/ash tree has become an *Aśvattha* tree (*ficus religiosa*) in India. Note that the source of light in the netherworld, that is, the night time stone (*aśman*) sky lies beyond it: it shines through the 'holes' in the sky as the stars (Witzel 1984, n. 104)

<sup>45</sup> It may be added now that all of them reflect a Eurasian-Amerindian (Laurasian) type, both in

various Sumero-Akkadian texts, represents the oldest recorded version of such myths, its proper understanding is of great importance for comparative mythology. Kuiper has given us a basis to work on (e.g., to better isolate Mediterranean influences in the Greek and Hittite versions of Indo-European myths). As for the Iir. antecedents of the RV and its Iranian counterparts (Avesta, Mithras cult, Armenian/Caucasus reflections), an in depth study of Nuristani and especially of the still extant Kalasha rites, songs, and festivals should now be taken up a by a Vedicist, preferably one who has some experience in the study of living rituals.<sup>46</sup>

\*\*\*

A few words should be said about F.B.J Kuiper as a person. I think all who came into closer contact with him got to know him as a noble-minded, equitable, and friendly person. He was open to all new ideas and enjoyed to discuss them with his friends, former students, new colleagues and his many visitors.

He keenly followed political developments. However, when we discussed, some five years ago, the rising tide of patriotism, nationalism and chauvinism in India, he was surprised to hear that some basic tenets of his understanding of Indo-Iranian history, such as the movement of speakers of Old Indo-Aryan into the subcontinent, were hotly contested these days. He simply registered his utter surprise about such lack of perceptiveness.

Kuiper was well liked by his many students who called themselves, after a Classical verse, the *Hertjes* ('deers', *mṛgāḥ*) wishing to be protected from the lion of Sanskrit grammar by Kuiper as their Guru (*vyākaraṇasimhabhītā apaśabdamṛgāḥ kva vicareyuh?*).

Kuiper had a number of hobbies. Like Caland, he liked to play his violin and he was a member of a quartet that united some of his close friends. He only gave up playing the violin when some of them died, long before him. He also liked driving fast cars, especially when he had to rush down, each Summer, to southern France --he enjoyed good wine-- where he had a farm house in the Dordogne (La Pleine at Grives, Belvès). When his eyesight deteriorated about a decade ago, he gave up driving, but after a successful eye operation immediately bought a new BMW.

As mentioned, he was in close contact, both in person as well as by letters, with a large number of scholars. He particularly enjoyed visitors from all parts of the globe who came to see him. Some of his more frequent visitors in his last decade were J. Narten and T.Ya. Elizarenkova, to whom he also gave many of the more specialized books of his library. Other books, for example his collection of, and personal notes on Munda, he donated to his old home, the Instituut Kern of Leiden University. Some other visitors included his old student J.W. de Jong and O. von Hinüber, during whose visit in the mid-Eighties we discussed and planned the future editorships of the IJ, that he continued to follow closely even after he had long retired from active editorship. Another prominent visitor then was P. Thieme. The two great men got along very well

---

mythology and ritual (Witzel in: *Mother Tongue VI*) that has its descendent in Indo-European, Mesopotamian (*Enuma Elish*), Japanese (*Kojiki*), Polynesian (*Kumulipo*), and Meso-American (Aztec, the Maya's *Popol Vuh*) creation myths.

<sup>46</sup> See n. 40.

in spite of some considerable scholarly differences of opinion.

Personally speaking, I remember with pleasure my close association with him for nearly a decade, when I was teaching at Leiden University, and after that, during a few visits, by letter or by phone. After my arrival at the age of 36, he became my last Guru in several of his specializations. In fact, he made a great and lasting impression all who came into close contact with him, for example the linguist A. Lubotsky, who arrived at Leiden about the same time, and who later on worked with Kuiper on several of his projects. Kuiper's wide range of expertise should have been rather intimidating for his younger colleagues. However, when I once complained about the growing specialization in Indian Studies and the narrowing of one's field of vision, he simply remarked: "Well, this is what we used to say about *our* predecessors..."

Kuiper typically was the forerunner of, or at the forefront of innovating research in several areas of our field, such as Indo-Iranian linguistics and mythology, or of Indian studies in general. The present writer, therefore, thinks himself lucky to have spent some nine years in Kuiper's close vicinity and in frequent contact. I particularly remember, and I am sure that I speak for others as well, the many spirited conversations with him in his house on the Händellaan at Voorschoten near Leiden, or at my home. They typically began in the afternoons which quickly turned into evenings, and sometimes extended long into the night. His wife, Hanna Nieboer, would join us for part of the conversation, and would supply us with coffee and "*nog een koekje*".

Also, I remember well the one occasion that I could persuade him to rejoin us at the Instituut Kern, in 1981/82, when Dipak Bhattacharya of Santiniketan stayed with us for a year, a stay that was intended to further his edition of the Paippalāda Saṃhitā of the Atharvaveda. We read some unpublished parts of this text, the manuscripts of which Dipak's father Durga Mohan had discovered and then borrowed in Orissa around 1960. In our weekly meetings Kuiper made many valuable suggestions, some of which have entered Bhattacharya's new edition. At such occasions, and sometimes also in his writing, he stressed the difficulty of arriving at a well-rounded interpretation, acerbated by what he called our "*personal māyā*" of background, upbringing, and other limitations.

Kuiper continued to read and write well into his nineties, until his eyesight again created more serious trouble for him. About five years ago he mentioned that a certain paper would now be his "swan song" -- but then he wrote three more, the last one of which is his discussion on Munda words in a complicated RV hymn. This was published in the Narten Festschrift in 2000 as *A bilingual Ṛṣi*. For many of us, the *Third Vedic Workshop* at Leiden in May 2002, which he attended for one afternoon, was the last time we could meet him in person.

During his last years he increasingly had to take care of his ailing wife, Hanna Nieboer, who indeed followed him just six weeks after he had passed away. From phone conversations, and earlier when we talked about his psychological papers on conception,<sup>47</sup> I could glimpse some of his personal beliefs about birth and death. I believe he looked calmly towards his own end. I also know that he was glad to see that some of his innovative ideas on the Indian linguistic area and on IIr. mythology were

---

<sup>47</sup> Prenatale elementen in archaische en oosterse culturen, In: *Strategie van de (pre)natale ervaring. Congresverslag*, eds. M. van Campenhout & F. Baets. Antwerp: Soethoudt 1980: 45-62, and in Engl. in his *Ancient Indian Cosmography*, 1983.

gaining wider acceptance during his last few years.

\*\*\*

While we now mourn F.B.J. Kuiper's passing we may take solace in the fact that we have had the privilege to have been associated with a great scholar of extra-ordinary mind and noble character whose work has inspired us for seven decades and will do so for a long time to come. His research was very innovative in all the many areas he worked in: whether he published a short note in *IJJ* or a detailed monograph, these contributions always contain a completely new approach to an old problem, or they deal with a novel topic first discovered by him. In my personal appreciation, Kuiper's oeuvre represents some of the most innovative and lasting research done in our field during the past century.