

IV. NEKROLOG

Franciscus Bernardus Jacobus Kuiper

On the 13th of november 2003 prof. F.B.J. Kuiper died, at the age of 96.

Frans Kuiper was born on the 7th of July 1907, in The Hague; his father was a primary school teacher. After the fifth year, he passed the state exam for gymnasium alpha. He studied in Leiden classical languages and Indology from 1923 to 1934; he studied Old Germanic with C. C. Uhlenbeck, Balto-Slavic with N. van Wijk. His doctoral exam was postponed because he got a stipend on condition that he would become teacher of classical languages in Batavia (now Jakarta) after his exam: he took his PhD degree (cum laude) a few weeks later (*Die indogermanischen Nasalpräsentien*, 1934, published in an extended version in 1937).

His professor of Sanskrit was J. P. Vogel, with whom he did not have much contact. He studied Vedic with (emeritus) W. Caland in Utrecht, the Avesta with J. H. Kramers in Leiden. Before he went to Batavia he married; they had five children of whom four are still alive. In 1939 he returned to Holland to take the chair of Indology in Leiden.

Kuiper saw the relevance of the laryngeal theory at an early stage. In 1947 he discussed the developments in Indic in 'Traces of laryngeals in Vedic Sanskrit'. Important studies are 'Shortening of final vowels in the Rigveda' (1955) and 'Zur kompositionellen Kürzung im Sanskrit' (1961).

His work on the laryngeals formed the basis of two dissertations, Beekes' 'Development of the PIE Laryngeals in Greek' (1969) and Mrs. Monna's 'The Gathas of Zarathustra: A reconstruction of the text', for which she received her degree in 1978 (with Beekes, as Kuiper had at that time lost his *ius promovendi*; Mrs. Monna was then 73 and so one of the oldest *promovendi* in Leiden).

In 1942 already Kuiper wrote one of his most influential works, his Notes on Vedic Noun-Inflexion. Here he elaborated on the idea of Holger Pedersen who in *La cinquième déclinaison latine* (1926) suggested that, beside the *o*-systems, Indo-European had just two inflectional systems, which were ultimately based on the stress. Kuiper demonstrated that the theory explained much Indic and Greek material, while he also showed how the younger inflectional systems can be understood as developments of the supposed older system. His treatment was completely convincing and the idea was soon generally accepted.

From the beginning Kuiper also occupied himself with the non-Indo-European languages of India. He thus made a description of Nahali, the language of a small tribe in central India. Kuiper knew the relevant major language families, like the Dravidian and Munda languages. He saw that from an early date Indic developed under the influence of these languages. Famous was his study 'The

genesis of a linguistic area' (1967), where he showed that innovations occurred across the language boundaries and that the influence of the indigenous languages was essential. He stressed that this influence can already be seen in hundreds of loanwords in the Rigveda. This points to early and intensive contacts, which were denied by several scholars. He once again summarized his views on these matters in 1991, on the instigation of A. Lubotsky, in Aryans in the Rigveda.

His work was also of importance for other Indo-European languages. In 1956 he wrote an article on the etymology of Gr. ἄνθρωπος, where he gave his view on Pre-Greek. These studies got stuck through the idea of an Indo-European language, 'Pelasgian', underlying Greek. Kuiper saw that this idea was untenable. His article was the basis of the dissertation by Furnée, *Die wichtigsten konsonantischen Erscheinungen des Vorgriechischen* (1972). This book is still the handbook for Pre-Greek.

From very early on Kuiper was also interested in the non-Indo-European elements of the Germanic languages. It was only in 1991 that he came to publish on the subject, in *Nowele* 25 ('Gothic *bagms* and Old Icelandic *ylgr*'). Kuiper always regretted that several Indo-Europeanists did not take non-Indo-European material seriously. His interest in 'exotic' languages was greatly stimulated by his stay in Indonesia.

Kuiper was always very much interested in ancient religion, and he thought that here he made his most important contribution. He felt that the old naturalistic interpretations, as in Oldenberg, were obsolete. Under the influence of the anthropologist J. P. B. de Josselin de Jong and of the historian of religion W. B. Kristensen, both from Leiden, he interpreted the central hymn of Vedism, Indra's fight with Vṛtra who held back the waters, as a cosmogonical myth. The idea is best formulated in his 'The Basic Concept of Vedic Religion' (*History of Religions* 15, 1975, 107–120), though he himself suggested friends to read only the first half of it, as the second part was rather speculative. See now e.g. Th. Oberlies, *Die Religion des Ṛgveda I*, 1998, for the influence his ideas had. Though there is criticism, the main idea has now been accepted by most Indologists. In his *Varuṇa and Vidūṣaka*. On the origin of Sanskrit drama, 1979, he treated the place of god Varuṇa in Vedic religion and his reflection in the personage of Vidūṣaka in Sanskrit drama. His articles on religion were collected and edited in 1983 (F. B. J. Kuiper, *Ancient Indian Cosmogony. Essays selected and introduced by John Irwin*, New Delhi).

In 1972 he retired as professor. He was honoured in several ways, by a *Festschrift* in 1968 (*Pratidānam*), he was a honorary member of the Linguistic Society of America (1966) and of the American Oriental Society (1971). With J. W. de Jong he founded the influential Indo-Iranian Journal.

He married for the second time, and they lived together for 35 years. His last years were not easy, as he had to care for his wife who was seriously ill. She died a few weeks after Kuiper.

Kuiper always had broad interests, which he kept to the very end of his life. He always clearly saw the essential points of a problem. His own work was innovative till the end. He was famous for his enormous knowledge, as well as his insight.

(It may be useful to mention F. B. J. Kuiper, *Selected Writings on Indian*

Linguistics and Phonology. Edd. A. Lubotsky, M. S. Oort and M. Witzel. Amsterdam – Atlanta GA (Rodopi) 1997. For his bibliography see Pratidānam, and IJ 1977, 1987 and 1997.)¹

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¹ I thank prof. H. W. Bodewitz, who collected many of the data.