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IN

SOUTHERN INDIA.

[PRICE, 4 rupees.]

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ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTES

IN

SOUTHERN INDIA.

With 40 Plates.

BY

EDGAR THURSTON,

SUPERINTENDENT, MADRAS GOVERNMENT MUSEUM;

SUPERINTENDENT OF ETHNOGRAPHY, MADRAS;

CORRESPONDENT ÉTRANGER, SOCIÉTÉ D'ANTHROPOLOGIE DE PARIS.



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PREFACE.

IT has been well said that "there will be plenty of money and people available for anthropological research, when there are no more aborigines. And it behoves our museums to waste no time in completing their anthropological collections." Under the scheme for a systematic ethnographic survey of the whole of India, a superintendent for each Presidency and Province was appointed in 1901, to carry out the work of the survey in addition to his other duties. The other duty, in my particular case—the direction of a large local museum—luckily makes an excellent blend with the survey operations, as the work of collection for the ethnological section goes on synchronously with that of investigation.

For many years I have been engaged in bringing together the scattered information bearing on 'Manners and Customs' in South India, surviving, moribund, or deceased, which lies buried in official reports, manuals, journals of societies, and other publications. The information thus collected has been supplemented by correspondence with district officers and private individuals, and by the personal wanderings of myself and my assistants, Mr. K. Rangachari (from whose negatives most of the illustrations have been made), Mr. V. Govindan and Mr. C. Hayavadana Rao, in various parts of the Madras Presidency, Mysore, and Travancore, in connection with the work of the survey, which demands the writing of a book on lines similar to Risley's 'Tribes and Castes of

Bengal. For the issue of this book the time is not yet ripe, and, as an *ad interim* measure, I send forth the present farrago in the hope that it may be of some little use and interest to those who are engaged in the study of ethnological and sociological questions in the arm-chair or the field. For such, rather than for the general public, it is intended.

To the many friends and correspondents, European and Native, who have helped me in the accumulation of facts, or whose published writings I have made liberal use of, I would express collectively, and with all sincerity, my great sense of indebtedness. And I would further express a hope that readers will draw my attention to the errors, such as must inevitably arise when one is dealing with a mass of evidence derived from a variety of sources, and provide me with material for a possible future edition.

“ Let those now send who never sent before ;
And those who have sent, kindly send me more.”

Some of the articles, originally published in my Museum Bulletins, are now reproduced with additions.

I may add that the chapter devoted to omens, evil eye, etc., is intended only as a mere outline sketch of a group of subjects, which, if worked up in detail, would furnish material for a very bulky volume.

E. T.

CONTENTS.

	PAGES
I. SOME MARRIAGE CUSTOMS	1-131
II. DEATH CEREMONIES	132-237
III. OMENS, EVIL EYE, CHARMS, ANIMAL SUPERSTITIONS, SORCERY, ETC., VOTIVE OFFERINGS.	238-365
IV. DEFORMITY AND MUTILATION	366-406
V. TORTURE IN BYGONE DAYS, AND A FEW STRAY SURVIVALS.	407-432
VI. CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN VERNACULAR SCHOOLS.	433-440
J VII. SLAVERY	441-463
VIII. MAKING FIRE BY FRICTION	464-470
IX. FIRE-WALKING	471-486
X. HOOK-SWINGING	487-501
XI. INFANTICIDE	502-509
XII. MERIAH SACRIFICE	510-519
XIII. ON DRESS	520-531
XIV. NAMES OF NATIVES	532-546
XV. THE COUVADE	547-551
XVI. EARTH-EATING	552-554
XVII. BOOMERANG	555-559
XVIII. STEEL-YARDS, CLEPSYDRAS, KNUCKLE-DUSTERS, COCK-FIGHTING, TALLIES, DRY-CUPPING.	560-573

PLATES.

	PAGE
BADAGA FUNERAL CAR	<i>Frontispiece.</i>
I. RĀZU BRIDEGROOM	7
II. KĀPU BRIDE AND BRIDEGROOM	27
III. VAKKALIGA BRIDE	38
IV. NAIDU BRIDE AND BRIDEGROOM	57
V. PATNŪLKĀRAN WALL DESIGN	76
VI. PŪNI GOLLA MUGGU	103
VII. GĀNIGA BRIDE AND BRIDEGROOM	106
VIII. NATĀDI ANCESTRAL CIRCLE	151
IX. TOTTIYAN MĀLĒ	152
X. TOTTIYAN MĀLĒ	154
XI. GAMMALA MUGGU	169
XII. SEMBADAVAN MĀYANA KOLLAI	221
XIII. EVIL EYE FIGURES	253
XIV. EVIL EYE SCARECROWS	254
XV. SACRED VULTURES, TIRUKAZHUKUNRAM	282
XVI. CASTING OUT DEVILS	290
XVII. PULLUVAN WITH POT DRUM	292
XVIII. PONGAL OFFERING	301
XIX. SORCERY FIGURE	328
XX. FORTUNE-TELLING WITH COWBY SHELLS	337
XXI. VOTIVE OFFERINGS	353
XXII. VOTIVE OFFERINGS	354
XXIII. SNAKE WORSHIP	357
XXIV. KĀDIR DILATED EAR-LOBES	369
XXV. DILATED EAR-LOBES	370
XXVI. MĀDHVA BRĀHMAN	405
XXVII. YĀNĀDIS MAKING FIRE	466
XXVIII. KĀNIKARS MAKING FIRE	467
XXVIII-A. BADAGAS MAKING FIRE	468

	PAGE
XXIX. PANIYANS MAKING FIRE	469
XXX. HOOK-SWINGING	493
XXXI. HOOK-SWINGING	495
XXXII. SIDI VIRANNA	499
XXXIII. PSEUDO-HOOK-SWINGING	501
XXXIV. MERIAH SACRIFICE POST	511
XXXV. THANEA PULAYAN LEAF GARMENT	526
XXXVI. TIYAN WOMAN	529
XXXVII. BOOMERANGS	556
XXXVIII. KNUCKLE-DUSTER; COCK SPURS	568

SOCIETY,
POONA.

SOME MARRIAGE CUSTOMS IN SOUTHERN INDIA.

At the outset I may appropriately quote the account of the Brāhman marriage ceremony as given in the Census report, 1891, to show how the Brāhman ritual has been grafted on the non-Brāhman community. "On the marriage day the bridegroom, dressed in true Vaidiki * fashion with cadjan (palm leaf) books and a bundle of rice on his shoulder, pretends to be setting out for Benares,† there to lead an ascetic life, and the girl's father, meeting him, begs that he will accept the hand of his daughter. He is then taken to the marriage booth (pandal), and is formally entrusted with the girl. The sacred fire (hōmam) is prepared, and worshipped with oblations of ghī (clarified butter), the blessings of the gods are invoked, and the tāli or bottu (marriage badge) ‡ is tied round the neck of the girl by the bridegroom. The couple then go round the sacred fire, and the bridegroom takes up in his hands the right foot of the bride, and places it on a mill-stone seven times. This is known as saptapadi (seven feet), and is the essential and binding portion of the marriage ceremony. The bride is exhorted to be as fixed in constancy as the stone, on which her foot has been thus placed. The bridegroom, holding the

* The Vaidikis are the first class of Brāhman, whose occupation is teaching the Vēdas, performing and superintending sacrifices, and preserving the moral principles of the people.

† The mock flight to Benares is known as Kāsiyātra.

‡ The tāli or bottu corresponds to the ring of European Christendom.

	PAGE
XXIX. PANIYANS MAKING FIRE	469
XXX. HOOK-SWINGING	493
XXXI. HOOK-SWINGING	495
XXXII. SIDI VIRANNA	499
XXXIII. PSEUDO-HOOK-SWINGING	501
XXXIV. MERIAH SACRIFICE POST	511
XXXV. THANDA PULAYAN LEAF GARMENT	526
XXXVI. TIYAN WOMAN	529
XXXVII. BOOMERANGS	556
XXXVIII. KNUCKLE-DUSTER; COCK SPURS	568

INDEX.

- ACHARAFAMAM CHETTI**—buried in a seated posture, 137.
- Agamudaiyan**—marriage with Maruvan, 130.
- Alia**—girls married to a bow, 34.
- Ambalakāran**—death ceremony, 219.
- Ambattan, Travancore**—death ceremony, 219.
- Ancestor propitiation and worship**, 3, 25, 46, 61, 75, 103, 104, 132, 136, 137, 140, 142-44, 146, 151-54, 156, 164, 165, 169, 199, 202, 204, 218, 219, 277, 355, 463.
- Animal superstitions**, 269-95.
- Arayan**—marriage, 43, 44.
- Ara**—marriage, 80.
- Ayudha pūja**, 360.
- BADAGA**—ancestor worship, 100; branding, 402; death ceremonies, 189-90; earth-eating, 554; fire by friction, 467; fire-walking, 476; marriage, 21, 33; marriage of the dead, 196; nicknames, 538; omens, 248; relations with Kurumbas, 319-20; tattooing, 382.
- Badhoyi**—marriage, 24, 81.
- Bagata**—marriage, 23.
- Balija**—marriage, 16.
- Bant**—cock-fighting, 570; death ceremonies, 202; marriage, 79.
- Barber**—fire-walking, 483; services at death ceremonies, 154, 158-63, 171, 198, 202, 203, 218; services at marriages, 25, 52, 70-72.
- Basaavi or Basivi (dedicated prostitute)**—branding, 400, 401; initiation ceremony, 40; marriage to idol or dagger, 36; tattooing, 383; village festival, 480.
- Bāvuri**—marriage, 100.
- Bēri Chetti**—marriage, 96.
- Besta**—branding, 400.
- Bhōgam (dedicated prostitute)**—marriage ceremony, 40.
- Bhonda**—garments made of bark, 527; marriage, 67.
- Billava**—belief in virtue of a buffalo bone, 273; death ceremonies, 203; marriages of the dead, 347; married to plantain tree, 47; names, 541; punishment, 421.
- Bolasi**—marriage, 81.
- Boomerang**, 555-59.
- Bora Muhammadan**—death ceremony, 226.
- Boya**—branding, 400; marriage, 43, 99.
- Brāhman**—branding, 403-6; confinement in stocks, 410; death ceremonies, 133-37; excommunication, 432; magician, 354; marriage, 1-6, 69, 72; married to arka plant, 44; married to plantain tree, 47; ordeal, 422; propitiation by lower classes, 258; pollution for dead snake, 289; propitiation of spirit of deceased Brāhman, 329, 331; treatment at Lambādi and Kannadiyan marriages, 58-60; treatment by Paraiyans, 458; treatment by Holeyas, 258, 458.
- Brāhman, Nambūtiri**—death ceremony, 166; names, 543; sacred fire obtained by friction, 464; snake shrine, 285, 287.
- Branding**, 398-406.
- Burial-ground**—robbery at (mayanakollai), 220-25.
- Burial site**—prehistoric, at Aditanallur, 149.
- CHAKKILIYAN**—marriage, 47; right and left hand factions, 47; tattooing, 378; wearing of charms, 268.
- Charms**, 259-69, 281, 474.
- Chenchu**—death ceremony, 206; flint and steel, 470; marriage, 34.

- Cheruman—conversion to Islam, 389, 447; death ceremonies, 163; marriage, 48, 99; privileges, 462-63; slavery, 443-47.
 Chetti—marriage, 68, 69.
 Circumcision, 385-90, 411; Dudékula, 24; Kallan, 24, 388.
 Clepsydra, 562-66.
 Cock-fighting, 569-70.
 Coorg—ancestor worship, 153, 355; birth ceremony, 35; death ceremonies, 205; marriage, 17, 87, 107.
 Corporal punishment, 433-40.
 Couvade, 547-551.

 DAIRA MUHAMMADAN—circumcision of converts, 390.
 Dāsari—month-lock, 402; possession by the deity, 476; services at Karamadai temple festival, 304.
 Death songs, 227-37.
 Deformity and mutilation, 366-406.
 Dēvānga—buried in a seated posture, 137; marriage, 77.
 Dhōbi—girls married to a tree sword, 35.
 Dōmb—tattooing, 364.
 Dommara—dry-cupping, 573; eat snakes and mungooses, 292.
 Donga Dāsari—branding, 402.
 Dress, 520-531.
 Dry-cupping, 573.
 Dudékula—circumcision, 24; marriage, 24.

 EAR-BORING, 347, 367-73.
 Earth-eating, 552-54.
 Eunuchs, 396-97.
 Eurasian—tattooing, 379.
 Evil eye, 72, 73, 97, 101, 253-58, 262, 263, 319, 353.

 FINGERS—amputation, 390-96.
 Fire by friction, 464-70; Toda, 181.
 Fire, sacred, 1, 2, 30, 43, 75, 134-36, 161, 164, 218, 260, 263, 464.
 Fire-walking, 471-86.
 Flint and steel, 470.

 GADABA—charm for cattle disease, 273; decline to touch horses, 270; dress improver, 528; marriage, 22, 33.
 Gallows, 427.
 Gamalla—birth ceremony, 306.
 Gāndla—marriage, 93.
 Gangimakkulu—marriage, 51.
 Ganiga—death ceremonies, 166; marriage of the dead, 106.
 Gauda—marriage, 80.
 Ghāsi—marriage, 23.
 Golla—marriage, 21, 193.
 Goundan—marriage, 55, 82.
 Gūdala—widow marriage, 49.

 HADDI—branding, 401; marriage, 23.
 Hasalara—death ceremonies, 164.
 Heggade—marriage, 28.
 Higma, (eunuch), 396.
 Holeya—blackening of teeth, 367; ear-boring ceremony, 368; marriage, 78; privileges, 457; settlement of boundaries, 321; slavery, 453-6; treatment of Brāhmins, 258.
 Hook-swinging, 487-501.
 Horse—curls or hair-marks as omens, 84-85, 245.
 Human sacrifice, 297-300, 309, 325-26, 464, 510-19.
 Hypergamy, 130.

 IDAIYAN—marriage, 21, 55, 70, 73, 77.
 Idiga—marriage, 35.
 Iluvan—marriage, 70, 78; vitil-kettu kalyānam, 124.
 Infanticide, 502-9.
 Irula—ancestor worship, 154; death ceremonies, 140-42, 147; flint and steel, 470; infanticide, 502; leaf garments, 525; marriage, 42; tattooing, 378.

 JAIN—cremation, 150.
 Jakkula—prostitutes, 31.
 Jalāri—marriage, 95.
 Jetti—knuckle-duster, 566-69.
 Jōgi—death ceremonies, 171; marriage, 16, 26, 57, 95; ordeal, 422 punishment, 414.

- KÄDIG**—death ceremonies, 148; flint and steel, 470; marriage, 83, 81; nicknames, 537; tooth-chipping, 383.
- Kaikolan**—adoption by Bhôgam woman, 41; ancestor worship, 154; dedication to temple service, 29; marriage, 98.
- Kallan**—boomerang, 556-59; circumcision, 388; death ceremonies, 205; dilated ear-lobes, 372; forms of punishment, 373; infanticide, 503; marriage, 18, 24, 53; polyandry, 108; pregnancy ceremony, 104; privileges, 457.
- Kallau Muppan**—marriage, 71.
- Kambala**—see *Tottiyân*.
- Kamma**—funeral, 459; marriage, 16, 39, 50, 51, 71.
- Kammâlan**—buried in a seated posture, 137.
- Kammâlan**, Malayalam—polyandry, 114; *tâli-kettu kalyânâm* (tali-tying marriage), 124.
- Kamsala**—marriage, 27.
- Kânîkar**—fire by friction, 466; marriage, 99.
- Kanisan**—performs operation of piercing ears, 375; polyandry, 113, 115.
- Kannadiyan**—marriage, 58, 79.
- Kâppiliyan**—cohabitation with brother-in-law, 108; marriage, 52, 82, 108.
- Kâpa** or **Beddi**—birth ceremony, 306; death ceremony, 226; marriage, 52, 72, 74, 92-93, 101, 113.
- Kathira vandlu**—branding, 399.
- Kavarai**—marriage, 37.
- Khodura**—honorific titles, 542.
- Khond**—crow legend, 278; death ceremonies, 165, 184; ear-piercing, 367; infanticide, 504-7; marriage, 8-13, 20, 26, 53, 65; Meriab sacrifice, 510-19; small-pox goddess, 343; sorcery, 324.
- Killokyata**—buried in a seated posture, 142.
- Knuckle-duster**, 506-69.
- Koi** or **Koyi**—death ceremonies, 155; bird superstitions, 278; marriage, 13-15; names, 543; sorcery, 322.
- Kojah** (eunuch), 396.
- Kômati**—marriage, 54, 88-91; marriage between living and dead, 104; relations with Mâdigas, 88-90.
- Konar**—marriage, 125.
- Konda Dora**—marriage, 100.
- Konga**—marriage, 52.
- Konga Vellâla**—marriage, 71.
- Koraga**—death ceremony, 156; leaf garments, 524; marriage, 78; names, 541; punishment, 427; slavery, 453.
- Korama**—couvade, 549-50; death ceremonies, 164; marriage, 92.
- Korava** or **Kuravan**—couvade, 547-48; death ceremony, 220; marriage, 97; ordeal, 423; perform ear-piercing operation, 369; snake-charmers, 289; tattooers, 376-77, 381.
- Kota**—branding, 398; death ceremonies, 184-88; fire by friction, 466; marriage, 62; names, 543; services at Badaga funeral and memorial ceremonies, 191, 200, 201; services at Toda funeral, 173-82.
- Kottai Vellâla**—keep slaves, 456.
- Krishnavakkakar**—marriage, 20; polyandry, 113.
- Kudubi**—buried in a seated posture 140.
- Kunnuvan**—marriage, 51.
- Kurni**—buried in a seated posture, 142.
- Kuruba**—branding, 400; blackening of teeth, 367; death ceremonies, 146; marriage, 75, 84-87.
- Kurumba**—death ceremonies, 147; fire by friction, 468; marriage, 64; musicians at Badaga memorial ceremony, 201; polyandry, 113; slavery, 445; sorcery, 199, 319.
- Kuruvikâran**—make spurious jackal horns as charms, 269.
- Kusavan**—manufacture of clay idols, 348.
- LAMBĀDI**—bells and rags as votive offerings, 344; infanticide, 507; mantrims, 265; marriage, 43, 49, 58, 60; stones as votive offerings, 357

- Cheruman—conversion to Islam, 389, 447; death ceremonies, 163; marriage, 48, 99; privileges, 462-63; slavery, 443-47.
- Chetti—marriage, 68, 69.
- Circumcision, 355-90, 411; Dudekula, 24; Kallan, 24, 388.
- Clepsydra, 562-66.
- Cock-fighting, 569-70.
- Coorg—ancestor worship, 153, 355; birth ceremony, 35; death ceremonies, 205; marriage, 17, 87, 107.
- Corporal punishment, 433-40.
- Couvade, 547-551.
- DAIRA MUHAMMADAN**—circumcision of converts, 390.
- Dāsari—month-lock, 402; possession by the deity, 476; services at Karamadai temple festival, 304.
- Death songs, 227-37.
- Deformity and mutilation, 366-406.
- Dēvānga—buried in a seated posture, 137; marriage, 77.
- Dhōbi—girls married to a tree ~ sword, 35.
- Dōmb—tattooing, 362.
- Dommarā—dry-cupping, 573; eat snakes and mungooses, 292.
- Donga Dāsari—branding, 402.
- Dress, 520-531.
- Dry-cupping, 573.
- Dudékula—circumcision, 24; marriage, 24.
- EAR-BORING**, 347, 367-73.
- Earth-eating, 552-54.
- Eunuchs, 396-97.
- Eurasian—tattooing, 379.
- Evil eye, 72, 73, 97, 101, 253-58, 262, 263, 319, 353.
- FINGERS**—amputation, 390-96.
- Fire by friction, 464-70; Toda, 181.
- Fire, sacred, 1, 2, 30, 45, 75, 134-36, 161, 164, 218, 260, 263, 464.
- Fire-walking, 471-86.
- Flint and steel, 470.
- GADABA**—charm for cattle disease, 273; decline to touch horses, 270; dress improver, 528; marriage, 22, 33.
- Gallows, 427.
- Gamalla—birth ceremony, 306.
- Gāndla—marriage, 93.
- Gangimakkulu—marriage, 51.
- Ganiga—death ceremonies, 166; marriage of the dead, 106.
- Ganda—marriage, 80.
- Ghāsi—marriage, 23.
- Golla—marriage, 21, 193.
- Goundan—marriage, 55, 82.
- Gūdala—widow marriage, 49.
- HADDI**—branding, 401; marriage, 23.
- Hasalara—death ceremonies, 164.
- Heggade—marriage, 28.
- Higra, (eunuch), 396.
- Holeya—blackening of teeth, 367; ear-boring ceremony, 368; marriage, 78; privileges, 457; settlement of boundaries, 321; slavery, 453-6; treatment of Brāhmins, 258.
- Itok-swinging, 487-501.
- Horse—curls or hair-marks as omens, 84-85, 245.
- Human sacrifice, 297-300, 309, 325-26, 464, 510-19.
- Hypergamy, 130.
- IDAIYAN**—marriage, 21, 55, 70, 73, 77.
- Idiga—marriage, 35.
- Ilvan—marriage, 70, 78; vitil-ketta kalyanam, 124.
- Infanticide, 502-9.
- Irula—ancestor worship, 154; death ceremonies, 140-42, 147; flint and steel, 470; infanticide, 502; leaf garments, 525; marriage, 42; tattooing, 378.
- JAIN**—cremation, 150.
- Jakkula—prostitutes, 31.
- Jālari—marriage, 95.
- Jetti—knuckle-duster, 566-69.
- Jōgi—death ceremonies, 171; marriage, 16, 26, 57, 95; ordeal, 422 punishment, 414.

- Kāṇḍa**—death ceremonies, 143; flint and steel, 470; marriage, 33, 81; nicknames, 637; tooth-chipping, 383.
- Kaikōlan**—adoption by Bhōgam woman, 41; ancestor worship, 154; dedication to temple service, 29; marriage, 98.
- Kallan**—boomerang, 556-59; circumcision, 388; death ceremonies, 205; dilated ear-lobes, 372; forms of punishment, 373; infanticide, 503; marriage, 18, 24, 53; polyandry, 108; pregnancy ceremony, 104; privileges, 457.
- Kallau Muppan**—marriage, 71.
- Kambala**—*see* Tottiyān.
- Kamma**—funeral, 459; marriage, 16, 39, 50, 51, 71.
- Kammālan**—buried in a seated posture, 137.
- Kammālan**, Malayalam—polyandry, 114; tāli-kettu kalyānam (tāli-tying marriage), 124.
- Kamsala**—marriage, 27.
- Kānikar**—fire by friction, 466; marriage, 99.
- Kanisan**—performs operation of piercing ears, 375; polyandry, 113, 115.
- Kunnadiyan**—marriage, 58, 79.
- Kāppiliyan**—cohabitation with brother-in-law, 108; marriage, 52, 82, 108.
- Kāpu** or **Beddi**—birth ceremony, 306; death ceremony, 226; marriage, 52, 72, 74, 92-93, 101, 113.
- Kathira vandlu**—branding, 399.
- Kavarai**—marriage, 37.
- Khodura**—honorific titles, 542.
- Khond**—crow legend, 278; death ceremonies, 165, 184; ear-piercing, 367; infanticide, 504-7; marriage, 8-13, 20, 28, 53, 65; Meriah sacrifice, 510-19; small-pox goddess, 343; sorcery, 324.
- Killōkysta**—buried in a seated posture, 142.
- Knuckle-duster**, 506-69.
- Koi** or **Koyi**—death ceremonies, 155; bird superstitions, 278; marriage, 43-15; names, 543; sorcery, 322.
- Kojah** (eunuch), 396.
- Kōmati**—marriage, 54, 88-91; marriage between living and dead, 104; relations with Mādigas, 88-90.
- Konar**—marriage, 125.
- Konda Dora**—marriage, 100.
- Konga**—marriage, 52.
- Konga Vellāla**—marriage, 71.
- Koraga**—death ceremony, 156; leaf garments, 524; marriage, 78; names, 541; punishment, 427; slavery, 453.
- Korama**—couvade, 549-50; death ceremonies, 164; marriage, 92.
- Korava** or **Kuravan**—couvade, 547-48; death ceremony, 220; marriage, 97; ordeal, 423; perform ear-piercing operation, 369; snake-charmers, 289; tattooers, 376-77, 381.
- Kota**—branding, 398; death ceremonies, 184-88; fire by friction, 466; marriage, 62; names, 543; services at Badaga funeral and memorial ceremonies, 191, 200, 201; services at Toda funeral, 173-82.
- Kottai Vellāla**—keep slaves, 456.
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- Kunnuvan**—marriage, 51.
- Kurni**—buried in a seated posture, 142.
- Kuruba**—branding, 400; blackening of teeth, 367; death ceremonies, 146; marriage, 75, 84-87.
- Kurumba**—death ceremonies, 147; fire by friction, 468; marriage, 64; musicians at Badaga memorial ceremony, 201; polyandry, 113; slavery, 446; sorcery, 199, 319.
- Kuruvikaran**—make spurious jackal horns as charms, 269.
- Kusavan**—manufacture of clay idols, 348.
- LAMBĀDI**—bells and rags as votive offerings, 344; infanticide, 507; mantrims, 265; marriage, 43, 49, 58, 60; stones as votive offerings, 357

- Omens, 83-86, 238-53, 473, 477, 493.
 Ordeal, 421, sq.
 Oriya—hypergamy, 130; names, 541, 542; sorcery, 324.
 Oriya castes—marriage, 79; married to an arrow, 35; married to a tree, 81.
 PADMA SĪLĒ—death ceremony, 169.
 Pelayakkāran—marriage, 42.
 Pallan—death ceremonies, 154; dilated ear-lobes, 370; marriage, 26, 82; slavery, 442.
 Palli or Vanniyan—marriage, 22, 84, 95.
 Pandāram—buried in a seated posture, 142.
 Pāndu kūli or Pāndava temples, 146-48.
 Paniyan—death ceremonies, 143; fire by friction, 468; marriage, 33; slavery, 447; sorcery, 317; tally, 571.
 Pāno—claims paternity of a Khond girl, 13; marriage, 51; services at Khond death ceremony, 165.
 Paraiyan or pariah—belief in omens, 244; buried in a seated posture, 139; death ceremonies, 160, 170, 271; dilated ear-lobes, 370; marriage, 17, 55, 66, 76, 81, 96; marriage of dead bachelors, 46; ordeal, 423; privileges, 457-59; services at Odde and Toreya funerals, 157-59; slavery, 441; tattooing, 380.
 Paraiyan, Malabar—odi cult, 314; sorcery, 317.
 Paraiyan, Travancore—convade, 550; slavery, 451.
 Parava—dilated ear-lobes, 370-71.
 Patnūkkāran—marriage, 76.
 Pattanāvan—death ceremony, 171.
 Pishārati—buried in a seated posture, 139.
 Polyandry, 108, sq.
 Poraja—witchcraft, 303.
 Prehistoric celt as votive offerings and medicine, 851.
 Pulayan—marriage, 21; tattooing, 378.
 Pullavan—marriage between brother and sister, 68; sorcery, 290.
- RAIN-PRODUCING RITE (Varūnajāpan), 227.
 Rājput—marriage, 95.
 Rāvelo—punishment, 426.
 Rāzu—bridegroom represented by a sword, 41; marriage, 6, 7.
 Reddi—see Kāpu.
 Belli—marriage, 26.
 Rhodia—tooth-chipping, 384.
 Right and left hand factions, 47, 90, 96.
- SĀLAGRĀMA STONK, 3, 136, 425.
 Savara—death ceremonies, 154, 206; marriage, 18, 19; sorcery, 303; votive offerings, 356.
 Sembadavan—marriage, 57; punishment, 411.
 Shānān—branding, 399; confinement in stocks, 410; conversion to Islam, 390; devil worship, 237; dilated ear-lobes, 370.
 Shōlaga—death ceremonies, 143, 156; marriage, 57, 64.
 Slavery, 441-63.
 Slaves—method of catching, 266.
 Snake worship and superstitions, 283-93, 354, 535.
 Sorcery, 296-338.
 Steel-yard, 560-62.
 Stocks, confinement in, 408.
 Syrian Christian—names, 546; tattooing, 379.
- TĪLI-KETTU KALYĀNAM—tali-tying marriage, 121-24.
 Tallies, 570-73.
 Tally—Khond, 13.
 Tattooing, 376-83.
 Teeth, blackening, 367.
 Thanda Pulayan—death ceremonies, 163; leaf garments, 525; marriage, 66; slavery, 452; sorcery, 333.
 Tiyan—clothing, 529; death ceremony, 218; dilated ear-lobes, 375; evil spirits and pregnant women, 279; marriage, 27; ordeal, 430; polyandry, 112.