

# 1 The First Part. Of the Life and Customs of the Brahmans on the Coromandel Coast and the Lands Thereabouts

## 1.1 Of the Four Main Tribes among the Pagans on the Coromandel Coast

It is our endeavour in this treatise not only to recount the life and practices of the *Bramines* [Brahmans],<sup>1</sup> but also to discover their belief and worship. We shall therefore split this work into two parts, and present in the first part the life and manners of the Brahmans and all that concerns this; and in the second part their religion and opinions of divine matters, including the practice and ritual thereof. But before we may begin to [p. 2] speak of the manners and the life of the Brahmans, and all that pertains to this, it will be necessary first to give an introduction regarding the tribes or lineages which constitute the pagan nation on the Coromandel Coast, for that will provide illumination and clarity in order to better understand what shall be said after this.<sup>[25]</sup>

The Brahman *Padmanaba* [Padmanabha] (from whose mouth I received all the mysteries of paganism which shall be discovered in this book) attested that there were

<sup>1</sup> All the old and many contemporary writers have called them *Brachmanes*; Some also called them *Bramenes* or *Bramos*; others *Bramins* and *Bramines* (as also our author generally does). João de Barros, a Portuguese author, decada 1, book 7, chapter 1, named them *Bramanes*.<sup>[23]</sup> This is, in my opinion, not so strange; subsequently also our author himself, in this first part, chapter 3, says that they have their name from *Bramma* [Brahma]. Such that perhaps they actually ought to be called *Brammanes*, or, as the pagans themselves, according to the testimony of Johan van Twist in his descriptions of the Kingdom of *Gusaratte* [Gujarat], call them, they ought to be called *Bramans*.<sup>[24]</sup> Many think that these are descendants of the children of Abraham, born to him from Chettura. Because these were expelled by Abraham, they are believed to have turned eastward and to have settled in the Indies: and the gifts which Abraham is thought to have given them (apart from gold and clothing), are believed to include the arts and sciences, foremost among them astrology, and natural magic, in which they have excelled of old. Epiphanius seems to also have been of this opinion, who in *contra haereses*, book 3, tome 2, page 343 mihi, says that the children of Abraham from Chettura, forsaken by him and sent away are supposed to have settled in the lands of Magodia, in the parts of Arabia. This Magodia seems to have been the city of Magulaba of Ptolemy, or the province of Magin, to this day named in this fashion, both located in Yemen, in Latin known as Arabia Felix. From whence they probably could have passed easily to Carmania or Sind, and so onwards to India.

four general tribes,<sup>2</sup> or lineages, among this nation. Whilst it nevertheless seems that there are five tribes to be counted, they insist that there are but four, as they do not deem the fifth to be worthy enough to be counted among the tribes. These four are: the tribe of Brahmans; the tribe of *Settreas* [Kshatriya]; the Weinjas [Vaishyas]; and the Soudras [Shudras]. They follow one another and surpass one another in worth in the order in which they have been placed here. The first and most noble is the tribe of the Brahmans: they also say that they are supposed to be the first and most pleasing<sup>3</sup> to God. The Brahman Padmanabha says that just as among all the beasts the cows; among all birds the bird *Garuda* [p. 3] (which is a red sparrowhawk with a white ring around the neck); among all trees the tree *Rawasittou* [the bodhi tree];<sup>[27]</sup> that also among all men, and tribes thereof, the first and most noble in the eyes of God was the tribe of the *Brahmans*. They are held in so high esteem among their nation, such that it is a matter beyond any objection that the tribe of the Brahmans be given the first place among tribes, and all others, from however respectable a tribe they may be, gladly acknowledge that the tribe of Brahmans surpasses them in excellence. The *Vedam* [Veda], or the law book of these pagans, has brought much esteem to this tribe, so that, like through a divine ordinance, they proclaimed that no Brahman may be killed<sup>4</sup> for any wrongdoing, however serious or shameful that crime may be. But whenever a Brahman commits wrongdoing in such a way as to

<sup>2</sup> In previous times they were split into seven tribes, or estates, among which the Brahmans or Gymnosophists were both the first and most noble. These were exempt from all labour, and served no one, as they received all they needed for sacrifices: they were also charged with the care over the dead, and they imagined, and also told the common man, that they knew everything that happened in Heaven and Hell. Next in line were the nobles, from whom the kings and their councils were chosen. After them the magistrates, soldiers, construction workers, herders and craftsmen. Most nations are divided in *tribus* or tribes in a similar manner: those of Egypt also into seven; those of Athens into four; those of Arabia into three (where the priests also stood out above others); the Romans and Thespians into two. And so also in different other [nations].

<sup>3</sup> Otto Heurnius, *Barbaricae Philosophiae Antiquitatum*, book 2, says that the Brahmans derive from kingly tribes; but he must not have been well informed, because [p. 3] should anyone approach the Brahmans and tell them this, they would become very angry.<sup>[26]</sup> And this would also not give them any honour but would mean a great belittlement, as it is certain that their tribe surpasses that of the Kshatriya, from whose ranks the kings are chosen.

<sup>4</sup> In the Kingdom of Japan, too, the kings and great lords may not be punished with death even should they deserve this punishment to the highest degree. Instead, they are banished to the island *Faitsiensima*, which is around a mile in circumference and located in the sea some fourteen miles to the east of Iedo [Edo i.e. Tokyo]. In all the corners of the island there are guardhouses and soldiers, so that no one may have any relations with them or give them any kind of assistance. They are fed in an austere manner with a little rice, roots from some trees and other inedible food. They live in small, poor houses, where the heat of summer and the cold of winter are ever oppressive. They must collect the silk from the silk worms, which are bred there, and they must prepare, spin, and weave as many pieces as they are given each year. See the description of Japan, page 160.<sup>[28]</sup>

deserve the punishment of death, then, in place of this punishment, his eyes must be gouged out. Because to kill a Brahman, according to what they say, is one of the five great sins<sup>5</sup> which cannot be forgiven lightly; such that the Veda, or the law book of the pagans, has decreed that he who kills a Brahman must go on a twelve-year pilgrimage<sup>6</sup> [p. 4] bearing the skull<sup>7</sup> of the dead Brahman in his hand and beg for alms, and that then he must eat and drink out of this that which he begged for, and that after the passing of the aforementioned time he must give many alms and must build a temple in honour of Shiva. Yet in the case that a Brahman goes to war to kill, then it is not such a great sin to kill a Brahman; and in this situation the manslayer is not obliged to do all the above as a penance; instead it might suffice (should he have the wealth for it) to have a temple built in honour of Shiva.

The second tribe in order is the tribe of the *Kshatriya*, which is also a matter beyond any dispute and is regarded as true by all the lower tribes. These are the nobles of the land which are called *Rajes* [raja] there, of which the king is the head, which is also why he begins his letters with “the Raja of Rajas, the God of Rajas”.<sup>8</sup>

In ancient times this tribe of nobles had but two branches, of which the first was named *Souriwansjam* [surya-vamsa]; they derived their name from the sun, as *Souri* [Surya] indicates the sun in *Samskortam* [Sanskrit], which is a language

<sup>5</sup> Regarding what these five great sins are, see chapter 18 in this same part.

<sup>6</sup> The Jews also had such a punishment when someone committed manslaughter. The manslayer was banished for three years and had to travel to all towns where Jews lived and proclaim on the street, with a loud voice, that he was a manslayer. He was not allowed to eat any meat, nor drink wine; he had to keep his hair and beard long and wear unwashed shirts and clothing; he was also not allowed to wash himself; each month he could only once cover his head; [p. 4] and the arm with which he committed the manslaughter had to be chained to his neck in order to atone for his crime. Some also had to lie in front of the synagogue and allow others to walk on them. But when they still had their own kings and the sceptre of Judea had not yet been taken by the Romans, manslaughter had to be punished with death (Exodus 21:12), a punishment which also has been in use by most nations on Earth at all times.

<sup>7</sup> They say that this punishment had to be borne even by their highest God *Eswara* [Shiva], since he had killed two *Raetsjasjaes* [rakshasas], sons of a Brahman. See *Barthrouherri* [Bhartrihari] in his sayings *Concerning the Virtuous Conduct of Men*, chapter 10.

<sup>8</sup> Namely the king of Carnatica. Others have different titles, of which they are at all times very proud and haughty. I found some [titles] in the writings of our author, which he himself drew from their letters. Here I shall add one or two of these. The king of *Pegu* styles himself the “Lord of the whole world, from east to the west, at sea and on land, the king of kings, king of the golden chair, of the ruby mines [p. 5], of all that is hidden beneath the earth, of the elephants and of the horses, whose equal is nowhere, head of a hundred and one tribes that are never sad and can always be armed.” The king of *Aracaon* thus: “I, the very mighty king of *Aracaon*, Boaxam; lord of the golden house, and of the red and white elephant, ruler over all the great empires of *Bengala*.” The title of the emperor of *Seylon* [Ceylon] is such that this, which we have now told, does not even come close to, yet in order to remain short we shall omit it.

in which all the mysteries of paganism are written and which is esteemed among the Brahmans, just as the Latin language is among the learned in Europe. These are so named because they are the true tribe of nobles. The other branch is named *Somowansjam* [soma-vamsa], and take their name from the moon, because in the aforementioned language *somo* [soma] means “moon”.<sup>[29]</sup> Apart from these two branches, there are nowadays many others, whose nobility is not so high, due to the fact that these have [p. 5] mixed with other tribes and therefore have debased their nobility. The former two intermarry among one another, but they may not marry those whose nobility has decreased to this degree.

The office of the nobles is to protect the land and to take care of the same, to oppose the enemy with force, to ensure that the Brahmans want for nothing, to establish that everything in the land functions well, to perpetuate the law and justice; in short, it is their office to govern the land well. Should they be poor, as there are many poor nobles due to the fact that they have to live off their land and do not have any particular income outside of this, they are not permitted to take up trade,<sup>9</sup> and their households are often greatly multiplied by children, so that they require more than their income provides, and thus they often leave behind poor children who then have to become soldiers for the wealthy nobles.

The third tribe is that of the *Vaishyas*. In this tribe there are some that are called *Comitjjs* [Komatis] and some who are called *Sitti weapari* [vyapari].<sup>[31]</sup> Both claim to be the true Vaishyas, but what constitutes this difference remains undecided and without pronouncement. These people sustain their offspring and make a living through merchant trade; the Brahman Padmanabha said that they have to conduct this in a just manner without deception, so that even with trade they may not earn too much. These people mostly behave in their manner of living as do the Brahmans, because the tribes of the Kshatriya and Shudras also eat fish and meat (with the exception of beef, which is in general prohibited for all tribes by the Veda; much as the Mohammedans abstain from pork,<sup>10</sup> [p. 6] so here all tribes abstain from beef,<sup>11</sup> [p. 6] and they also are much more repulsed by it than the

<sup>9</sup> The same reports Rhodiginus, book 22, last chapter, of the nobles of the Thespians who were so opposed to all [merchant] trade and artisan trade, that they thought that, should anyone take up one of these, that their nobility would be voided and they would not be worthy to be called a nobleman. Hence, it has also arisen that most of the nobility fell into extreme poverty.<sup>[30]</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad forged the Alcoran [Koran] [p. 6] out of Judaism, Christianity, and paganism; and he took out of each what he liked best, so that there is not one single principle in the whole of the Alcoran which he did not borrow from one of these three; this too he took from the Jews, among whom it was forbidden to eat pork. Leviticus 11:7 and Deuteronomy 14:7.<sup>[32]</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Not only here on the Coromandel Coast; but also in the whole of Malabar, *Calicutthen* [Calicut], *Gusaratte* [Gujarat] and different other places in India. For more on this see the notes on chapter 14 of this same part.

Mohammedans by pork). In the same manner the Vaishyas abstain from anything that once lived,<sup>12</sup> just as the Brahmins, as we shall recount here later.

The fourth tribe is that of the *Shudras*; these are the common people. This tribe has among them many and different lineages, all of whom insist that they surpass the others, so that it often happens that one or the other lineage goes somewhat beyond what is the usual custom in marriage or the burial of the dead; as a consequence, it sometimes happens that a whole town is thrown into turmoil.<sup>13</sup> I remember well that in the year 1640, in the month of January, the whole town of *Paliacatta* [Pulicat], located on the Coromandel Coast, was in an uproar, as the Palijs, that is the lineage of poultry sellers, had spread a cloth upon the ground when burying one of their dead, over which the dead would be carried; the tribe of the Cauwreaes did not want to abide by this, declaring that this was their due and not that of the Palijs, and that they had turned a blind eye to this for a time but would not allow this any longer. Consequently, [p. 7] the dead remained unburied for some days, until the authority of the governor of our nation ordered the dead interred. Whereupon the Palijs were so angry that they marched out of town with their wives and children and called the Cauwreaes to an open battle; and as the Palijs have some among the lineages of *Shudras* who, in times of strife, needed to ally themselves with them, it came that they, through threats, also called these out of the town; and so on the 23rd of January all carpenters, smiths, and goldsmiths, and all who were engaged in these crafts, departed from the town and those who remained in the town refused to work. And much unrest and time passed before this dispute could be resolved, and it did not occur without bloodshed, because in the month of March fifteen Palijs were killed in a battle by the Cauwreaes; so one can see how precisely each lineage values its own.

Before it was said that the *Shudras* have among them many lineages. These have each their own particular name, with which they can be distinguished from one another, and frequently they also practise different crafts, whereby they

<sup>12</sup> The Gymosophists, the Egyptian Priests, and the old Greeks also used to not eat anything that had lived at any point. Among the laws of Triptolemus, which could be seen for a long time in the temple of Eleusis in Athens, was also this: “carnibus non esse vescendum”.<sup>[33]</sup> The reasons which led them to this apparently derived from the mistaken belief in the transmigration of souls after death, of which we shall speak more in the last chapter of the second part. Among the Christians there were also some who did not want to eat any meat: the Manichaeans, Tatians, Eucratians, and others. Marcion said that those who ate meat would not be saved. The Jews were also prohibited from eating some animals, Deuteronomy 14. But after the coming of Christ this distinction between foods was removed. See Matthew 15:11, Romans 14:17, Colossians 2:16, 1 Corinthians 10:25 and also other places.

<sup>13</sup> The Persian Histories recount that the great Tamerlane, having come up against his enemies to fight such terror [p. 7] and insurrection of some rotten people and bands among the common people, had to turn back on multiple occasions, until he finally had some of the chiefs deftly executed; and so finally some relief and silence was brought to the common populace.<sup>[34]</sup>

sustain themselves. But one of the best lineages is that of the Wellala, some of them governors, some sustaining themselves through farming. After them, they say the Ambria should follow, most of whom sustain themselves through sowing, some serving the great lord; yet in Pulicat they also sustain themselves through masonry. The other lineages I shall not put in order here, as there is no consensus among them as to who should be listed next, but every one of them argues strongly and claims and proclaims their lineage to be better. The Cauwreaes are a truly great lineage; they call themselves the “lineage of the three hundred”;<sup>14</sup> among this lineage, they accept all those who have forgotten their lineage and therefore are without a lineage; as a consequence, they compare this lineage with the sea, [p. 8] which collects all the water from rivers yet never becomes full; some of this lineage are governors, many are painters who paint the linen cloth which forms the clothing of their nation as well as of others across the sea, namely in Aracan<sup>15</sup> and most especially in Pegu,<sup>16</sup> where these paintings are much desired and used. Many are soldiers. The Sittij are merchants and also porters, when they have no means for trade. The Paly are poultry and swine sellers, and also porters, some sow, some paint, some are soldiers; in olden times they were, so they say, famous for valour in war, as they were men of the battlefield. The Jenea are weavers, barely one in twenty becomes a soldier. The Cottewanien sell fruit, such as Pisang<sup>17</sup> and the like, as do the Sittijs. The Illewanien also sell fruit, such as figs,<sup>18</sup> cocos<sup>19</sup> [coconuts] and iagara [jaggery], that is black sugar. The Kaikulle are a despised people, many

<sup>14</sup> I [was able to] find in a book that came into my possession recently, written in a sure hand, [the claim] that this lineage is called in this manner because Bhartrihari (whose sayings shall be printed hereafter) left his three hundred wives, whom he had married, in order to become a San-jasy [Sannyasi]. And he had permitted them to marry another man; with a promise that this would not be regarded as a sin or ignominy for them nor for their descendants. [p. 8] Out of these marriages the lineage of the three hundred is supposed to have come forth. They still maintain the practice that their widows may remarry, which the others may not. See chapter 19 in this same part.<sup>[35]</sup>

<sup>15</sup> A superb kingdom adjoining Pegu.

<sup>16</sup> Pegu is a very mighty kingdom whose king in one day can bring five to six armies consisting of three to four hundred thousand men to the field of battle, as it occurred in the war that [its king] started against his uncle, the king of Auua, who owed him tribute (much like a number of others) and refused to pay him this. This kingdom, and also this war, has been described briefly and skilfully by the Venetian Gasparo Balbi.<sup>[36]</sup>

<sup>17</sup> What kind of fruit this Pisang is can be seen in [Van] Linschoten chapter 55.<sup>[37]</sup>

<sup>18</sup> There are different types of figs in India. See the description of this in Van Linschoten, chapter 55.

<sup>19</sup> The Portuguese call these fruits “coquo”, as the three holes that are inside resemble the head of a meerkat. The Malays call it “Nihor”. The Persians, and Arabians, “Nargil”. See further the same Van Linschoten, chapter 56.

of the women are whores, which is not considered shameful among them,<sup>20</sup> the men are dancers,<sup>21</sup> some weave, some sow, some serve as soldiers. The Sitticaram are merchants, but differ [p. 9] from the Sittijs mentioned above, who are also merchants, due to the types of wares that they sell. The Caltaja are goldsmiths, blacksmiths, stonemasons, carpenters, and builders. The Carrean are fishers, who fish with large nets. The Patnouwa fish with small nets. The Maccova also fish with large nets. The Callia are also fishers who have their own particular way of fishing. The Conacapule are scribes. The Gurrea are herders. The Bargeurrea are also herders, but they are Bergas, which among these people is a very honest lineage. The Riddi are farmers; some are soldiers. The Camawaer are farmers; many are soldiers. The Berga-willala are mostly farmers. The Innadi are usually soldiers, few are farmers. The Moutrea are mostly soldiers. The lineage of the Tolowa does not exist any longer, only the name is now known. The lineage of the Palla is the lowest among the Shudras, because it is only slightly better in prestige than the *Perreaes* [Paraiyar], of whom we shall speak hereafter. But to the Shudras also belongs the tribe of Correwaes, which is a tribe that is somewhat special and particular; these people do not have any home nor do they stay in a town like the other lineages, but they keep moving across the country, with their wives and children. They live in small huts which they erect for short periods outside of towns, so that whenever they leave, they can put these with their belongings, which are few, along with their pots and pans, on small donkeys, which they keep with them for this reason. These people sustain themselves by making *Joupen* and *Tatous*, that is little tubs with which rice can be drained, and lids, with which the rice pot is covered when the rice is cooked, and through which the water can be drained. These people also carry salt from the seashore into the country on their little donkeys, and because their donkeys are small and can carry little, and because the people are poor, they are exempt from taxation in the land and are left unmolested. It is said that the wives of these Correwaes, who ordinarily walk with a basket under their arm, are able to foretell the future. They convince people of this, which they find not to be harmful, and also make no small profit from the people. [p. 10]

<sup>20</sup> Not only does this still happen nowadays in different places in India, but it used to be a common practice among the Indians in olden times, according to the testimony of Rhodiginus, book 18, chapter 31. For a coin with an elephant minted on it, from which the coins took their name, women allowed themselves to be used; and it was not only not shameful, but to the contrary a great honour, as their beauty was so enjoyed by a stranger.

<sup>21</sup> These walk across the entire country; they seek to earn their living with this [p. 9] and offer their services everywhere. They are also able to dance marvellously on ropes, and all sorts. These pagans value such players and dancers very highly for their entertainment.

## 1.2 Of the Paraiyars, a Tribe Which the Pagans Do Not Consider Worthy of Being Counted among Their Tribes

In the previous chapter we spoke of the four main tribes of the pagan nation on the Coromandel Coast and the surrounding land. In this chapter we shall discuss the Paraiyars,<sup>22</sup> who are a very despised people among the pagans, a people they do not regard as honourable enough to be counted among their lineages. They also do not want to permit them to live amongst them; instead, these *Perreaes*, and *Perresis*, (by the first name the men and by the second the women of this despised people are called) live together in towns, in a corner of a town and in the open country; they do not build their houses in villages, but a great distance separated from the village, so that it seems to be a small village of its own. They may not fetch water out of the draw-well that the people of the village use, but have their own well close to their houses, and in order to prevent the other tribes from, unknowingly, drawing water from the wells of the Paraiyars, the Paraiyars must scatter the bones of dead beasts around their wells, as a sign and warning; this is done in this manner and observed, and so their wells are recognised as theirs. These people may not walk through the streets in the towns where the Brahmans live, and in the country they may not set foot in the villages of the Brahmans; they are also forbidden from entering the temples<sup>23</sup> of their God *Wistnou* [Vishnu] or Shiva. It is said that they are considered unclean<sup>24</sup> by the Brahmans, and therefore would pollute the Brahmans with their [p. 11] uncleanliness; and so, too, the temples,<sup>25[38]</sup> which they consider sacred places.<sup>26</sup>

These people sustain themselves in the country by sowing, digging and mining, by making walls for houses that are made with earth; and they build almost all the houses of the common people, because carpenters find little or almost no work there. They also handle all the foul work<sup>27</sup> that no one wants to do, but they do it willingly, as it is their calling.

<sup>22</sup> These are called "Pseudobrachmannos" by Epiphanius, *contra haereses*, book 3, page 345.

<sup>23</sup> In Egypt, according to the report of Herodotus, book 2, chapter 47, those handling swine were also not allowed to enter any temples; no one married their daughters; they were not allowed to propose marriage to anyone but those who were of their same ancestry; and they were also considered unclean.

<sup>24</sup> It is beyond doubt that this is because they touch and eat that which has been killed. They derive this from the Jews, amongst whom it was also forbidden to touch any dead and therefore unclean animals, in order not to become unclean. See Leviticus 5:2 and 11:24.

<sup>25</sup> In a similar manner, the Jews also considered the tabernacle of the Lord polluted if someone had touched anything dead without having been purified. See Numbers 19:13.

<sup>26</sup> See chapter 10 of the second part.

<sup>27</sup> This lineage is called *Theers* [Dher] in the Kingdom of Gujarat; they seem to be neither pagans, nor Moors, but to live by themselves without any belief nor worship. And besides handling all sorts of foul work, and skinning carcasses for flesh which they eat, they also sustain themselves by being executioners.<sup>[39]</sup>

These people eat very foul things, because besides edible food they eat cows, horses, goats, chickens, and all such species more that have been killed,<sup>28</sup> so that one need not wonder why they are scorned by their people and regarded as unclean, especially by the Brahmans, who value external purity so highly, much as the Pharisees.

This lineage is divided into two types, the first of which is simply called Paraiyars, and the other Siriperen. The craft of the latter is to handle leather, to prepare it and to make bridles and more such things. Some serve as soldiers. The former, called Paraiyars, are considered to be a better lineage than the second, wherefore under no circumstance should they eat in the houses of the Siriperen. But the Siriperen may well eat in the houses of the Paraiyars, and they must also worship them, by lifting their hands and standing up before them. A certain Siripere in Pulicat in the year 1640 did not want to do this, and therefore the Paraiyars seized him and cut his hair,<sup>29</sup> which is the greatest affront and shame that can be done to anyone. [p. 12]

These Siriperen, whenever they marry, may not erect any Pandael with more than three stakes. It is important to know that, whenever a bride is in the house, some stakes are set up in front of the house, that are covered above with light sticks, higher than a man is tall, on which greenery is laid to provide shade underneath; and around the stakes, which are the pillars and stand straight, Pisang leaves are fastened as marks of joy. This construction is called a "Pandael" in the language of the land; when constructing such a Pandael, these people may not use more than three pillars, and should they go beyond this, the whole town will rise up as a consequence.

These people are confined to servitude; because when someone from the lineage of the Comitijis, the Sittijis, the oil makers, the Palijs, smiths or goldsmiths dies, and should the deceased have been wealthy, and they want to purchase a shroud [for him], they give it to the Siriperen; these Siriperen must cut off their beards and when the corpse is brought out of the town or village, to be burned or buried, they must walk behind. Yet those without means simply let them go behind the corpse, and give to each of them a Fanum, or one and a half, which is a piece of money, worth seven Groats there.

<sup>28</sup> Jacques Tolck [Joosten], in the description of his small world, says that still nowadays the inhabitants of Hofpodarschekin in Russia have such a fondness for carrion that they, with a peculiar appetite, fish it out of rivers and other places, and prize its intestines and viscera as the rarest and most delicious food in the world.<sup>[40]</sup>

<sup>29</sup> This manner of punishment [p. 12] seems to be a remnant of an old custom which was practised in ancient times by the Indians. Nicolaus, *περι εθων* and Isidore, *Etymologiae*, book 1, attest that whenever someone had overstepped and wronged him greatly, the king would have his hair cut, which was the greatest punishment one could inflict on anyone.<sup>[41]</sup>

### 1.3 Whence the Brahmans Have Their Name and Their Different Sects

The Brahman Padmanabha said that they take their name from Bramma [Brahma] (but how this should be, we shall relate later<sup>30</sup>) and that they bear this name in his honour, as they consider themselves to be his descendants.<sup>31</sup> It is true that they also consider the other tribes to be his descendants, but that they nevertheless took the name of Brahma [p. 13] because they came forth from his most honourable part, namely from the head; and that the Kshatriya came forth from the arms, the Vaishyas from the legs, and the Shudras from his feet. To the Brahmans this is proof that they are more dignified than the other tribes.

The Brahmans are divided among themselves, either in respect to their faith or regarding the manner in which they live their lives. As regards faith, there are six types of Brahmans: the *Weistnouwa* [Vaishnava], the *Seivia* [Shaiva], the *Smaerta* [Smarta], the *Schaerwaeck* [Charvaka], the *Pasenda* [Pashanda, “heretics”], and the *Tschechte* [Shakta].

Those of the Vaishnava sect say that Vishnu is the Supreme God,<sup>32</sup> and that no one is his equal; and because of the fact that they regard Vishnu as the Supreme God they are called *Vaishnava*. Those of the Shudra lineage, when their faith matches theirs, are called “Daetseri”, which means “servants”. But it is important to know that when they are called in this way, so said the Brahman Padmanabha, that they are understood to be servants of the Brahmans; this the Brahmans consider a great honour for the Shudras, to be allowed to be called servants of the Brahmans. They convince these people that this service, with which they provide the Brahmans, is considered so highly by God<sup>33</sup> as if it were done for him himself; they tell the Shudras that those from their lineage who lose their life in the protection of the

<sup>30</sup> Principally in the first chapter of the second part.

<sup>31</sup> According to their belief, all humans are his descendants, as they recognise him as the creator of Heaven and Earth, and all that is contained within these. See for this the notes on the first chapter of the second part.

<sup>32</sup> If this word, “Vishnu”, is a proper name, (which I really do not believe, but instead think that it is a common name, as “God” is for us, or “Deus” for the Latins) this goes against the Holy Truth, and the opinions of Plato, who says that God is not corporeal; that one cannot say what he is; and that he does not have a name. This he seems to have borrowed from Hermes Trismegistus (or it may very well have also come from Moses), who long before had said that God was one, and that this one God had no need for a name; and that he was also something that had no name, or, as this Trismegistus says in a different place, that his name was not pronounceable by humans. Nevertheless, they are in accordance with almost all other pagans in this, all of whom also gave their gods proper names.

<sup>33</sup> As these are very holy people, *homines sacri*. In like manner the *philosophers* were regarded among the Greeks, the *Magi* among the Persians, the *Chaldeans* among the Babylonians, the *Druids* among the French, and the *Turdians* among the Spanish.