In the Indian tradition it is believed that to come in contact with the right sort of guides and friends is rare, and if one does, it is a grace, a free gift of God. I realized the wisdom of it when I started this dissertation. With all interest and personal ability, one should admit, that a great deal of the success of a research depends on the guide. In this respect God has been very lavish on me. I was fortunate in getting the right guide and right friends at various stages of my dissertation.

I am deeply indebted to my guide Dr. K.S. Nair of the department of Anthropology of the University of Poona, for his valuable suggestions, sustained encouragement, demanding corrections, challenging questions, and timely warnings. His guidance helped me to deepen my grasp of the topic and his expertise in research methodology to present my data scientifically. We started as strangers and as the thesis shaped our friendship also developed into an inalienable bond of guru-sishya relation. He was so busy with other commitments that we worked in his residence during morning hours and, I must accept, that he did not treat me merely as

ix
a student, but a member of his family. I also register my gratitude to the family members, particularly to Dr. Mrs. Nair for her encouragement and warm hospitality.

I also gratefully remember the Head of the Department and Staff of the Faculty of Anthropology, the University of Poona, for their friendliness and guidance.

Numerous people helped me at different stages of this thesis. I am very grateful to Fr. Schlegel, the librarian of Jnanadeepa VidyaPeeth for generously making the library facilities available to me. I also register my thankfulness to artist Jyoti Sahi for sharing his personal library with me as well as for the enlightening discussions. Jayakar library remained a good source of reference.

In the 'field', I am thankful to James Thottakath S.J. for his hospitality in providing me with boarding and lodging and my informants who were very generous with their time and knowledge of the 'field'. I would like to mention four of them by name: Kanjan Poojari, Pius Aringalan (Kumaran Gurukal), Thomas Kapiar and Kannaperuvannan, (Pappinacherry), who is no more. Kannaperuvannan was an exceptional informant, and I would like to register my warm gratitude to him. In spite of the fact that I was a total
stranger, he took special interest in me and gave valuable information about all aspects of theyyam. He used to accompany me in theyyam festival sites and personally introduce me to many other theyyam artists. But for him, photographing many of the important theyyams would not have been possible. Here again, our acquaintance developed into a very deep relationship. Informations about theyyam I can still get from others, but that unique friendship, that pristine folk interest, I will continue to miss and therein lies my grief.

I would like to express my special gratitude to Mr. Austin D’Rozario who generously agreed to undertake the tedious task of carefully correcting the manuscript and touching up the style. I gratefully remember Dr. Promod Raiker, director of ‘Snehasadan’ and Stany Fernandez S.J., Rector Loyola School, Pune, for making the computer facilities available to me.

Last but not least, my friends and well-wishers, especially Stephina and Placid who remained a continuous source of encouragement and unceasing support; and those numerous ones who share the same sentiments and are too many to be mentioned by name.