

THE FRAGILE RICHNESS OF MANUSCRIPTS COLLECTIONS IN KERALA

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The Hindu on Monday, March 27, 2006, recorded an official release from Kerala according to which “Several ancient manuscripts, some of them dating back about 1,000 years, have been traced from different old ‘Manas’ and ‘Illams’ in various parts of the district [of Trichur, central Kerala]”. If such a high dating for palm-leaf manuscripts needs to be confirmed, much less surprising is the fact that untraced old manuscripts can still be found in Kerala.

In Premodern (Hindu) Kerala, both kings and brahmins used to own palm leaf manuscripts (in Sanskrit or vernacular), which thus were stored and copied in libraries of different kinds: royal households (*kōvilakam*), temple or brahmin colleges and other colleges of learning (*maṭha* or *vāriyam*), and brahmin private houses (*mana* or *illam*, which are the names given to the traditional Nampūtiri or Malayāḷam brahmin family-houses).

The main royal collections were those belonging to the three historically most powerful dynasties in the country, viz. the *rājas* of Travancore in South Kerala, the *rājas* of Cochin in Central Kerala, and the Zamorins of Calicut in North Kerala. These three collections were also the first of which lists were published at the end of the nineteenth century, viz. by Gustav Oppert, in his *Lists of Sanskrit Manuscripts in Private Libraries of Southern India*, vol. 1, Madras: Government Press, 1880 [listed in NCC s.v. *Oppert*],

pp. 232-251: [Malabar District, in Madras Presidency] “Kōlikkōṭu (*Calicut*), H.H. the Ciria Anujan Rāja of Paṭiññāre Kōvilakam at” (193 mss);

pp. 250-267: “Tiruppuṇittura, H.H. the Mahārāja of Cochin at” (358 mss);

pp. 464-485: “Travancore, H.H. the Mahārāja of Travancore” (423 mss).

Fifteen years later, in 1895, the Nirnaya Sagar Press in Bombay published a Sanskrit catalogue of the Mahārāja of Travancore’s Palace Library (*Śrī Anantaśayana-stha-rājakīya-saṃskṛta-pustaka-ālaya-sṭhita-pustaka-nāma+āvalī Anantavilāsa-stha-pustaka-nāma+āvalī ca*, 133 pp., cf. Biswas 1998: 1004), listing 2157 mss from the Rājakīyagranthaśālā and 375 mss from the Anantavilāsa (?).

In the same Travancore State and under royal patronage, the Department for the Publication of Oriental Manuscripts was established in 1908, popularly known as the Curator’s Office, with the famous pandit T. Gaṇapati Śāstrī at its head. Its aim was not only the publication of valuable manuscripts from the Palace Library (in this case, usually one new copy was made in devanāgarī characters, which transcript served as the basis for the collation and the subsequent edition in the Trivandrum Sanskrit Series), but also the purchasing of supplementary copies and other manuscripts from private libraries in different parts of the land.

According to the testimony of the second Curator, K. Sāmbaśiva Śāstrī (*Brief Resume of the Working of the Department for the Publication of Oriental Manuscripts till 1934*, Trivandrum: Government Press, 1934, p. 14):

“You will be surprised to hear that though every owner was reluctant to lend these manuscripts, only very few knew their worth and usefulness. There have been instances innumerable where owners of manuscripts have actually burnt them to ashes lest they should be made use of by any person on earth and where they were tied up into bundles and drifted into the rivers”.

In 1934 (*ibid.* p. 18), about 315 libraries had been visited, of which 298 in Travancore, 11 in Cochin State and Malabar District and 6 elsewhere in British India, for an amount of 2852 manuscripts collected (there will be about 3000 mss in 1940). The results of this important task of collection were consigned in short reports in the form of few pages booklets: 7 vols by T. Gaṇapati Śāstrī from 1912 to 1923 (each entitled *A catalogue of Sanskrit manuscripts collected... for the Department for the publication of Sanskrit manuscripts*, Trivandrum: Government Press, cf. Biswas 1998: 0999, listed in NCC s.v. *Triv. Cur.*— see the Preface of the first report about the discovery of the famous “Trivandrum plays” in the Manalikkara Maṭha), and 15 vols from 1926 to 1940 (*Annual report of the Department for the publication of Sanskrit manuscripts for the year...*, Trivandrum : Government Press, cf. Biswas 1998: 0998, listed in NCC s.v. *Tra. Ad. Rep.*), which provide important information on the provenance of the mss. During that time the Palace Library was reclassified by K. Sāmbaśiva Śāstrī (*Revised Catalogue of the Palace Granthappura (Library)*, Trivandrum : Government Press, 1929, 226 pp. — alphabetical list in tabular form of about 2050 Sanskrit mss, cf. Janert 1965: 315, Biswas 1998: 1005, listed in NCC s.v. *Granthappura*), who, thereafter, edited the monumental descriptive catalogues of both the Palace Library (*A Descriptive Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts in H.H. the Maharajah’s Palace Library*, Trivandrum: V.V. Press Branch, 1937-1938, 8 vols, 3229 pp. for about 2800 “general numbers” of titles, and a few less serial = shelf numbers of mss [listed in NCC s.v. *GD*], with extracts and notes, cf. Janert 1965: 313, Biswas 1998: 1006) and the Curator’s Office Library (*A Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Curator’s Office Library*, Trivandrum: V.V. Press Branch, 1937-1941, 10 vols, 3933 pp. for about 2500 “general numbers” of titles and a few less serial numbers of mss [listed in NCC s.v. *TCD*] which, in this case, are different from the shelf numbers in the library; cf. Janert 1965: 312, Biswas 1998: 1000). Both these catalogues remain a treasury of valuable and useful informations; the COL one usually gives for each ms. the name of the original owner (despite the fact that he makes no cross-references to the previous reports themselves).

The Travancore University (which became later the University of Kerala) immediately after its establishment, in 1938, organised a branch for the collection and preservation of manuscripts. As the first consignment to this new library, the famous collector R. Anantakrishna Sastri procured 1300 palm leaf

mss from the Kūṭallūr Meleṭattu Mana (accessioned as nos 1-1300; cf. Sarma 1993: xiii). Soon after, in 1940, the Curator's Office was transferred to the control of the university and its library was amalgamated with the University Manuscripts Library (KUMML, which became, some time after 1965, the present **Oriental Research Institute & Manuscripts Library**, located in a special building in Kariyavattom campus). Between 1957-58 and 2000, 7 volumes of an *Alphabetical Index* were published by different editors, as the numbers 186 (1957), 215 (1965), 254 (1984), 256 (1986), 259 (1988), 264 (1995) and 266 (2000) in the Trivandrum Sanskrit Series (cf. Janert 1965: 316, Biswas 1998: 1008, to which must be added the last two vols, edited under the respective supervisions of K. Vijayan and P. Visalakshy), reaching a sum of about 35000 serial numbers (corresponding to about 26000 mss, about half of which were listed in NCC s.v. *Trav. Uni.* on the basis of the preparatory hand-lists). In this simple alphabetical list in tabular form, the former mss of the COL are easily identifiable, preserving their previous accession (shelf) number, preceded by the letter "C." or "T." (in the case of a transcript). As for the mss coming from the Palace collection, which were integrated later in the university library, they are unfortunately unrecognizable as such in the *Alph. Index*: only the register of acquisition allows to know that the shelf numbers around 19000-20000 correspond to the mss from the royal collection. And the same is true for all the mss which were progressively acquired by the library. Before the eventual making of a new descriptive catalogue (if it is not a hopeless project!), it should be thus of some interest, on the basis of the accession register preserved in the storing room (in very bad state, and which, moreover, is often imprecise and even sometimes silent about the mss provenances), to publish a list of all the original collections from which came the mss (e.g. the shelf numbers around 8300 are from the Chirakkal Palace Library; around 10500 from the Edappally Palace; around 14500-15500, from the "Paliyam estate" collection, acquired in 1953; around 16000, from the Manalikkara Maṭha in Kanniyakumari Distr., etc. — the mss noted by a "L." were originally on loan, for which there is also somewhere a hand-list of the owners; recent acquisitions are not yet catalogued, such as the collection of about 300 mss from the Anantapuram Palace, Haripad, Alappuzha Distr.; a programme of digitalization of the mss has started in 2003-04).

In 1937, the Madras University started the *New Catalogus Catalogorum* project, in which Keralan scholars such as C. Kunhan Raja, at the beginning (co-editor of the vol. 1 issued in 1949), and, later, K. Kunjunnī Raja (head, and editor of vols 6-11, 1971-1983) were involved. Hand-lists of mss collections from Kerala (mainly located in the former Cochin State) were made for this special purpose. They are listed in the beginning of the catalogue (vol. 1, 1969², pp. i-xxiii, here provided with the corresponding numbers in Biswas 1998):

1. *Āccaṅkulam* : A hand-list of 11 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Āccaṅkulattu Vāriyam, **Trichur**, Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0990]
2. *Āḍhyan Nambūdrīpād* : A list of 110 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Āḍhyan Nambūdrīpād's house, Vaḍakkumbhāgattu Mana, Eravur, **Trippunittura** P.O., Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0316]
3. *Akalamannattu Mana* : A hand-list of 62 manuscripts in possession of Kuttancheri Moossad, Kurumanallur, **Vadakkancheri** P.O., Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0521]
4. *Āmpallūr* : A hand-list of 25 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Āmpallūr Eledattu Manakkal, **Mulanthuruthy** P.O., Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0698]
5. *Āvaṇapparambu Mana* : A hand-list of 199 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Āvaṇapparambu Manakkal, **Vadakkancheri** P.O., Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 1038]
6. *Brahmasva Maṭha* : A hand-list of 168 manuscripts in the Brahmasva Maṭham, **Trichur**, Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0991]
7. *Cherānallūr Kartā* : A hand-list of 33 Sanskrit manuscripts in the house of Cherānallūr Kartā, **Ernakulam**, Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0317]
8. *Cherp* : See Krāṅgāt Mana [cf. "Kīrangattu mana" in Biswas 1998: 0230, Sarma 2002: 44].
9. *Chirayattu Mūttatu* : A hand-list of 50 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Chirayattu Mūttatu's house, **Irinjalakkuda**, Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0420]
10. *Cranganore* : Two hand-lists of the manuscripts, 367, and printed books in the library of the Cranganore Palace, **Cranganore**, Kerala State. [omitted in Biswas 1998]
11. *Elaṅkulattu Kurūr Bhaṭṭatiri* : A hand-list of 52 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Elaṅkulattu Kurūr Bhaṭṭatiri Manakkal, Ernakulam [to read **Elamkulam** according to Sarma 2002: 29.10, 44, viz. in Perinthalmanna Taluk, Malappuram Distr.?] P.O., Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0318]
12. *Elaṅkunnappuzha Kovilakam* : A hand-list of 20 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Elaṅkunnappuzha Naṭakkal Kovilakam, **Nārakkal** P.O., Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0740]
13. *Kainur* : A list of 33 manuscripts in the Kainur Mana, **Ollur** Station, Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0758]
14. *Kāvilpattattu* : A hand-list of 24 manuscripts in the Kāvilpattattu Mana, **Kunnankulam** P.O., Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0516]
15. *Killimangalattu Mana* : A hand-list of manuscripts in the Killimangalam Mana, **Mullukara** P.O., Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0701]
16. *Kīṭaṅgaśśeri Mana* : A hand-list of 90 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Kīṭaṅgaśśeri Mana, Kizhuttani, **Irinjalakkuda**, Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0421]
17. *Kizhakkumbhāgattu Mana* : A hand-list of 145 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Kizhakkumbhāgattu Mana, **Puttankuriśśu** [?], Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0880]
18. *Koṭṭappaḍi Mārayāt* : A Hand-list of 14 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Koṭṭappaḍi Mārayāt Mana, **Kunnankulam** P.O., Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0517]
19. *Krāṅgāt Mana* : A hand-list of 155 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Krāṅgāt Mana, Perumpilliśśeri, **Cherp** Post, Cochin, Kerala State. [Same as *Cherp*]
20. *Kumarapuram* : A hand-list of 31 manuscripts in the Kumarapuram Palace, **Ollur**, Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0757]
21. *Kuṭṭancheri* : A hand-list of 89 manuscripts in the Akalamanna Kuṭṭancheri Mana, Kumaranelloor, **Vadakkancheri**, Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0511]
22. *Kuttikkāṭṭu* : A hand-list of 20 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Nārakkal Kuttikkāṭṭu Kartā's house, **Nārakkal** P.O., Cochin, Kerala State. [omitted in Biswas 1998]

23. *Maccāṭ* : a hand-list of 47 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Maccāṭ Māttampilli Elayatu's house, **Vadakkancheri**, Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 1039; = ? "Macchattu E[l instead of printed k]ayatu, Trichur" with 30 mss as listed by Sarma 2002: 34.218]
24. *Muriṅgot Nambiyār* : A hand-list of 40 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Muriṅgot Nambiyār's house, Mamala, **Mulanthuruthy** P.O., Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0669]
25. *Naḍuvil Maṭham* : A hand-list of 179 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Naḍuvil Maṭham, **Trichur**, Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0993]
26. *Paliyam* : A hand-list of 1068 manuscripts in the private collection of the Paliyam family, **Cochin**, Kerala State. Copied from a hand-list supplied by P. Anujan Achan, State Archaeologist, Trichur, Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0237]
27. *Pallippurattu Mana* : A hand-list of 71 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Pallippurattu Mana, **Mulanthuruthy** P.O., Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0699]
28. *Pallurutti* : A hand-list of 30 manuscripts in Pallurutti Mangalappilli Elayat House, **Pallurutti**, Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0807]
29. *Pañjāl Muṭṭattukāṭ* : A hand-list of 78 Sanskrit manuscripts in the **Pañjāl** Muṭṭattukāṭṭu Māmaṇ.a Mannakkal, Cheruturutti P.O., Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0231]
30. *Pātramaṅgalam Nambīśan* : A hand-list of 14 manuscripts in the house of Pātramaṅgalam Nambīśan, **Kunnankulam** P.O., Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0518]
31. *Puliyannūr Mana* : See Trippūñittura III.
32. *Putuvāmana Mana* : A hand-list of 64 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Putuvāmana Mana, Tattara, **Mulanthuruthy** P.O., Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0700]
33. *Sakti* : A hand-list of manuscripts with Śakti Śāstrigal, **Āykudi**, via Tenkasi, Travancore State [Now Tamil Nadu]. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0062]
34. *Sucindram* : A hand-list of 200 manuscripts with P.N. Sarma, Āyurvedāśramam, **Suchindram**, Travancore [Now Tamil Nadu]. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0953]
35. *Tāmarakkāṭṭu Mana* : A hand-list of 71 manuscripts in the Tāmarakkāṭṭu Mana, Tottaradeśam, **Mulanthuruthy** P.O., Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0989]
36. *Tekkemaṭham* : I-IV. Four hand-lists of manuscripts in the Tekkemaṭham, **Trichur**, Cochin, Kerala State, containing respectively 109, 97, 47 and 120 manuscripts. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0994]
37. *Tiruvāṅkulam* : A hand-list of 16 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Tiruvāṅkulam Vāriyam, **Trippūñittura** P.O., Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0977]
38. *TPL* : A typed list of 36 manuscripts in the Public Library, **Trivandrum**. [cf. Biswas 1998: 1013]
39. *Trippūñittura* : Five hand-lists of collections of manuscripts in **Trippūñittura**, Cochin, Kerala State, containing respectively 1839, 353, 211, 43 and 33 manuscripts.
I & II Lists — of mss. in the Palace Library.
III List — of mss. in the Puliyannur Mana. Same as *Puliyannur Mana*.
IV List — of mss. in the Vadakkedattu Mana.
V List — of mss. belonging to Āyurvedavidvān T. Kunchu Varier.
[cf. Biswas 1998: 0995]
40. *Turuttikkāṭṭu Kartā* : I. A hand-list of 33 Sanskrit manuscripts in the house of Nārakkal Turuttikkāṭṭu Kartā, **Nārakkal** P.O., Cochin, Kerala State.
Do. I.-A. Another list of manuscripts in the house of another member of the family in the same containing 7 manuscripts.
Do. II A list of 20 manuscripts in the Nārakkal Kuttikkāṭ Kartā's house, Nārakkal. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0741]
41. *Turuttikkāṭṭu Maṭham* : A hand-list of 20 manuscripts in the Nārakkal Turuttikkāṭṭu Maṭham, **Nārakkal** P.O., Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0742]

42. *Uzhuttara Vāriyar* : A hand-list of 32 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Uzhuttara Vāriyam, **Trippunittura** Post, Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0997]
43. *Vaḍakkemaṭham* : A hand-list of 91 Sanskrit manuscripts in the Brahmasvam Vaḍakke Maṭham, **Trichur**, Cochin, Kerala State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0992]
44. *Vādhyān* : A hand-list of 131 manuscripts in the Vādhyān Manaikal as also in the Killimaṅgalam Mana, Āttūr, Mulloorkarai P.O. [= Killimangalattu Mana, **Mullu(r)kara?**] Cochin State. [cf. Biswas 1998: 0060]

These lists are still kept in the Department of Sanskrit of Madras University (MUDS), but it is not easy to see them (maybe through the electronic version of the “Catalogus Catalogorum - Catalogue of Sanskrit and Allied Works and Authors” at <http://gist.ap.nic.in/cgi-bin/s1/s1catlist.cgi>, it will be soon possible to “select one of the Catalogues from the given Catalogue List to find the Books available in that catalogue” (*sic*), at least the mss listed in the already published vols of the NCC). However, most of the private collections listed for the NCC do not longer exist. Some of them have been included in larger institutional collections, as it is known for the Paliyam family’s collection transferred to the KUMML (cf. *supra*, the note in NCC 5, 1969, p. iii, and Biswas 1998: 0237), some have simply disappeared. From my own limited experience on the Keralan field, in January 2002 and 2004, when I was searching for mss of the BdP/JaiSa listed in the NCC, I was able to collect the following information explaining the disappearance of mss in the places I visited:

- (4.) Āmpallūr Eledattu Manakkal : mss transferred to KUMML after 1945.
- (5.) Āvaṇapparambu Manakkal : mss once given to Calicut University.
- (10.) Kodungallur (Cranganore) Palace : part of the mss transferred to Calicut University, part to the Trichur Archaeological Museum from where to the Trippunittura Hill Palace Museum (some may have reached the KUMML, cf. the accession numbers around 22500 from “Marumakan Tampuran, Puthencoilakam, Kodungallur”).
- (15.) Killimangalattu Mana : mss said to have been once transferred to KUMML, GOML and/or Calicut University.
- (32.) Putuvāmana Mana : mss dispersed among the family.
- (34.) Suchindram, Āyurvedāśramam : according to V. Sharma, nephew of P.N. Sharma, living in Trivandrum (and owner of a collection of Malayāḷam mss), his uncle’s collection does not longer exist.

On the other hand, I seized the opportunity of a Vedic pilgrimage to Pāññāl, Trichur Distr. (in the year 2004) for verifying by myself that the collection of mss in the Muṭṭattukkāṭṭu Māmaṇṇa (no. 29) was still there (within a box). After its listing for the NCC and, some years ago, by A. Parpola and M. Fuji (maybe also by K.V. Sarma, cf. 2002: 48 s.v. “Pāñjal Mutta”), it has even been listed a third (fourth?) time by my guide P.L. Shaji, administrative officer at the KUMML. Namely, I could see (in 2002) that there are still mss (in very bad state of preservation) in the Vaḍakke Brahmasva Maṭha (= no. 6 + 43?), which seems not the case for the two other linked, and dying, Vedic colleges in Trichur (Naḍuvil, no. 25, despite the existence of another list referred by Sarma 2002: 52, who p. 34.220 still lists 11 mss; and Tekke, no. 36). The collection of the

Kitaṇṇaśṣeri Mana (no. 16) in Irinñālakkūṭa, Trichur Distr., is also still in existence according to Y. Ikari who got copies of Vādhūla mss from there (cf. EJVS 2/1, 1996, and A. Parpola, SO 55, 1984: 436). The same for the collection of the Vaḍakkumbhāgattu Mana (no. 2), apparently visited by K.V. Sarma in his manuscript tour (2002: 12). The enquiry should be pursued for the rest of the Keralan collections listed in the NCC (e.g. the collection of the Puliyaṇṇūr Mana, no. 31 = no. 39.III, appears to have reached the KUMML, accession numbers around 11000; the survey of manuscripts in India by the IGNCA at <http://ignca.nic.in/manus004.htm>, still mentions the Trivandrum Public Library, no. 38, under the title Kerala Granthasala Sandham [*sic*, for Sanghom], adding, in the same city, the State Archives of Kerala, as well as the Kottayam Public Library, depending both of the Government of Kerala).

The case of the collection of the Trippunittura Palace Library (no. 39.I-II, cf. already Oppert 1880) is different, since it constituted the bulk of the collection of the present (Sri Rama Varma) **Government Sanskrit College** in **Trippunittura**, with about 2500 mss satisfactorily stored, and catalogued (by K. Rama Pishroṭi? cf. Biswas 1998: 0996) unfortunately in a unique handwritten catalogue in Malayāḷam script (which nonetheless deserves to be published before to be definitively lost...). I had the pleasure to visit another **Government Sanskrit College**, in **Pattambi**, founded in 1911 by the brahmin-lord Punnasseri Nampi Neelakantha Sarma. The collection of 292 palm leaf mss originating from his family-house, are now preserved in the library of the College and in course of being catalogued (a second time, because the first list was lost...) by P.L. Shaji (cf. S. Azhagiri, *Vijnanacintamani* 1, 1999, p. 68). Such a type of collection could be also found in the Mahajana Sanskrit College - high school of Perdala (P.O. Nirchal, Kasaragod Distr.). There are also valuable mss collections in Āyurvedic Colleges (**Āyurvedic College, Trivandrum**, now catalogued; **Arya Vaidya Sala, Kottakkal**, Malappuram Distr.) and various other cultural institutes such as the **Kerala Kalamandalam** (est. 1930; Cheruthuruthy, Trichur Distr.) and the Trichur **Sahitya Academy** (est. 1955; the mss. there are mostly in Malayāḷam language, referred by the IGNCA as “Rama Verma Research Institute, Town Hall”), or private “research centres” (patronised by temple foundations or spiritual movements) such as the **Sukṛtīndra Oriental Research Institute** (est. 1971, linked to the GSB Kashi Math Sansthan in Varanasi; having moved from Mattanchery to a new building in Kuthapady, Thammanam, Kochi - Ernakulam, where, as far as I could see, mss are well stored there is a hand-list of 850 mss according to Biswas 1998: 0298; the first vol. of the catalogue was made by S. Venkitasubramonia Iyer, *A Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts*, Cochin: Sukṛtīndra Oriental Research Institute, 1999, Sukṛtīndra Indological Series no. 4, in which are listed, in tabular form with extracts at the end for several of them, 1402 serial numbers corresponding to about 500 mss, a good number in devanāgarī script on paper

and the ones in Malayālam script mostly collected by S.V. Iyer himself, unfortunately without information about the original owners; the second vol. of the catalogue was announced as coming soon but apparently not yet published) or the **Chinmaya International Foundation** (est. 1990; housed in the ancient Melpazhur Mana, renamed as “Adi Sankara Nilayam”, supposed maternal home of Sri Sankara, in Veliyanad, Edakkattuvayal vil., Ernakulam Distr.; the collection, preservation and publication of mss was one of the projects of the CIF, and a workshop on manuscriptology was held in 2002; see also at <http://www.chinfo.org/Articles.asp?Topic=Nilayam&id=3&page=1>, the testimony about/by N.V Ramachandran and Paul L. Kuepferle, of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, who visited the Melpazhur Mana in the 80s with the intention of tracking old manuscripts, the existence of which was attested in N. Aiya’s *Travancore State Manual* vol. 2, p. 97: “when asked as to whether any manuscripts were stored in the illom, Raman Nambudripad [the owner] replied that until recent times there were palm leaf manuscripts, but quite recently one of the members of the family had passed them on to some scholars who had come looking for manuscripts with the promise that they would return after printing them. But then they had not received back their manuscripts. As a sequel to this, in October 1987 N.V Ramachandran says that he checked up with Sringeri Shankaracharya Mutt at Kalady and Sringeri in case the manuscripts were lodged there but he did not get any information from them in this regard. They have put a note in their research that tracing these lost manuscripts could reveal some valuable information about this Mana and surroundings. According to them there are several private manuscript collections in these area and that a serious survey alone can help to locate some of these for the possibility of these manuscripts going to other hands or any educational institutions according to them is only minimal.” Differently, in the article by Tapovan Prasad, *ibid.*: “Some 60 years ago, certain palm leaf manuscripts which could have given details about the illam were also lost. According to Sankaran Namboodiri, two persons posing as archaeological researchers came to the Mana and took away those books with the intention of getting them printed in the Government Press. They promised to return the originals and bring a printed copy of each, but to this date, there has not been any information about those books.” And according to Dr. A. Ramaswamy Iyengar, Director of the CIF, also *ibid.*: “Various palm leaf manuscripts carrying commentaries on different subjects as well as information about this ancient mana were with his family up to some 50 years ago. It is said that on the request of some people who offered to have them printed, the family parted with them, but these were not returned.”). The young (est. 1993) **Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady**, Ernakulam Distr., has also started to collect mss (it should be noted that in the same place, the [Sringeri] Sri Adi Sankaracharya Mutt is supposed to have mss according to K.T. Pandurangi 1978: F, and the report of the CIF quoted *supra*).

For the North of Kerala, the Department of Sanskrit established in the **University of Calicut** in 1977 has collected manuscripts from several families for an amount of nearly 1500 items. Under the general editorship of M.S. Menon, N.V.P. Unithiri edited a first vol. of a descriptive *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, Calicut: University of Calicut, 1985, Calicut University Sanskrit Series no. 1 [Biswas 1998 : 0199]1, listing 511 serial numbers. In the introduction, the names of some donators are given, but the original houses from where the mss were purchased are not named thereafter (and I did not find any report published on the mss survey in North Kerala conducted by N.V.P. Unithiri with A.N. Akujkar in June-July 1983). The main problem is that the referred shelf numbers in the catalogue were lost during the transferring of the mss to the library of the Department of Malayalam, where all the palm leaf mss are now kept. Nevertheless, an electronic list exists for the whole collection, enabling to find again, without too much difficulty, the mss previously catalogued under different numbers. It is also in the Department of Malayalam that one can find a hand-list of about 9800 (Malayāḷam and Sanskrit) mss preserved in 150 scholarly families in North Kerala, established by M.M. Purushottaman Nair (I did not have the opportunity to check this very important source). This testifies for the fact that it is not only possible but urgently needed (due to the fragilness of the mss) to continue the explorations in order to discover hitherto unknown private traditional collections.

In the last twenty five years, supplementary repositories of mss in Kerala have been found, listed and/or sometimes even photographed by:

1°) Vedic scholars such as A. Parpola, M. Fuji and Y. Ikari working on the present Jaiminīya and/or Vādhūla traditions. For the Jaiminīya houses with mss, an interim report was presented by Parpola and Fuji at the 12th WSC, Helsinki, in 2003, providing a preliminary list of the collections of the Nellikkāṭṭu Mana and the Perumaññāṭṭu Mana in Pāññāl. The Vādhūla houses preserving important important collections of mss are the Kitaññaśseri Taraṇanallūr Mana (cf. MUDS no. 16 *supra*) and, also in Irinñālakkūṭa, the Neṭumpillī Taraṇanallūr Mana (cf. Parpola 1984: 436, and 438 for the quotations from a first report made by F. Staal in 1971), for which there is a provisional catalogue according to Y. Ikari (1996).

2°) K.V. Sharma, through a project carried out during 1995-97 and which has led to the monograph *Science Texts in Sanskrit in the Manuscript Repositories of Kerala and Tamil Nadu* (gen. ed. V. Kutumba Sastry), New Delhi : Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, 2002, Saṃskṛtavarṣasṃgrahamālā no. 1. The problem of the work is its lack of precision and complete mixing of old datas coming from out-dated lists (MUDS and old catalogues) with new datas from the author's own quest for manuscripts (about which there is only a very short report p. 12). In the numbered list of "Manuscripts repositories surveyed for identifying sciences texts in Sanskrit : Kerala" (pp. 29-35), I am still unable to verify the

author's sources of information for the small collections represented by the nos 11 (Irinjalakudda Illam), 12 (K.S. Krishna Variyar, Kannanpuzha), 13 (Turuttikkatt Illam, Karikkode), 14 (Karingampallisseri Mana), 17-18 (Ettadattu Veedu and Kadiyakkal Matham, Kottayam), 25 (Mannazhi Mana), 26 (Kutallor Mana, Nagilasseri), 28 (Suryakaladi Mana, Nattasseri), 30-31 (Kizhakke Variyam and Nedumpurakkal Mana, Nedumpura), 183 (Palakkadu Variyam), 186 and 193 (Kayancheri Mana and Vatakkekkara Mana, Panjal), 194 (Pantamaparambu House), 197 (Manayattattu Mana, Talayolaparambu), 242-243 (K. Mahadeva Sastri's and V. Venkatarama Sarma's collections, Trivandrum) and 245 (Alampalli Kavikunjara Sastri's house, Venganadu), whereas the nos 33-181 from "North Kerala" (among which the nos 106-181 remain unnamed) obviously are picked up from the Calicut hand-list referred *supra*. However, from the comparison with the "Abbreviations of mss. lists and catalogues" (pp. 43-51), it is possible to identify noteworthy supplementary present collections, a part of which were probably listed by the author himself (cf. his testimony p. 12) in the following places: Āyāṅkuḍi (**Kaṭutturutti**, Kottayam Distr.; 3 manas), Chittanda (Kumaranallur, **Vadakkancheri**), Deśamaṅgalam (**Cheruthuruthy**), Kanippayoor (**Kunnamkulam**; important collection of 2200 mss in the private Sankaran Nampūtirippād Kāṇippayyoor Memorial Library, where several collections from other manas were deposited), **Killimangalam** (Ikkaṇḍattu Pattāyappura Vāriyam), **Kottayam** (6 collections, including the Chirattaman Illam in Olaśśa), **Kuttiapuram**, Nedumpura (**Cheruthuruthy**; 2 manas), **Pāñjal** (one mana in addition to the Jaiminīya ones listed by Parpola-Fuji), Pariyapuram (**Tanur**, Malappuram Distr.), Pāzhūr (**Piravam**, Ernakulam Distr.), **Tiruvalla** (3 illams), Varavoor (Trichur Distr.), Veṅkiṭaṅgu (**Chavakkad**, Trichur Distr.), to which can be added the collection of the late "Stanu Pillai, Travancore State Astrologer" and the author's own private collection kept in Madras. Finally, among the "helpful custodians of manuscripts collections" enumerated by the author in his Preface (p. 12), I cannot see to which collections are linked "Rama Varma Maru Thampurān, Chalakkudi" and "Nārāyaṇan Nampūtirippād, Kaṭalāyil Mana", while "Dr. C.M. Nilakandhan Namputiri, Pattambi" is obviously attached to the Sree Neelakantha Sanskrit College, despite the fact that the College collection is absent from Sarma's lists.

3°) the National Mission for Manuscripts (set up by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India) which could have let think that a more systematical and rational survey and cataloguing would have started. It is apparently not yet the case in Kerala, despite the collaboration with the Mission of two Keralan institutions recognized as Manuscript Resources Centres (see at <http://namami.nic.in/mrc.htm>): the ORI&ML, since 2003, which "has so far conducted survey and documented thirteen institutions and fifty-two private collections in the southern part of Kerala"; and the Thunchan Memorial Trust (Thunchan Parambu, Tirur, Malappuram Distr.), which, starting in June 2004,

“has done significant work during the short span towards the survey and documentation of manuscripts. Exploration and documentation of two institutions and one hundred and nineteen personal collections has emanated a data of 5515 manuscripts in three districts of North Kerala . The Institute has enriched the e-granthavali database by 3000 manuscripts [the data pertaining to the manuscripts documented by the Mission are expected to be shortly made available online through the use of a software developed for the purpose and called the e-granthavali]. The MRC also helps C-DIT [Center for Development of Imaging Technology] to locate the Kutiyattam manuscripts in Kerala for digitization.” It should be noted that the record from the Hindu quoted at the beginning of this article refers to a manuscripts survey launched in 2006 by the State Archives Department in collaboration with the National Manuscripts Mission, despite the fact that the former does not appear as one of the MRC; the places where mss were then traced are (at least) “a Mana at Chalakkudy” and “the Koodalmanikkam Devaswom”. The publication of official detailed reports from the Mission in Kerala is eagerly waited for.

4°) Various authorized sources, oral or written. E.g. P.L. Shaji who told me about a collection of 1000 mss in the Vaidya Matham, Melattur (Malappuram Distr.), a collection in Veññānellūr Mana (?= Vellāñnellūr near Koṭuñnellūr, as referred by Parpola 1984: 436 nos 14-15) and several other private collections (in Tirur, Trichur area, Kottayam and Trivandrum, where Prof. Puttusery Ramachandram holds, among other, mss recovered from a Tiruvalla Ṛgvedic brahmin family). E.g. K. Kunjunni Raja, who in his Preface to Sarma 1993, wrote about the possibility to trace mss in the Kottakkal Vāriyam, the Panniyampalli Vāriyam and the Zamorin’s *kovilakam* at Kottakal. The editions of Sanskrit texts or manuscripts from Kerala can also provide useful informations about possible additional collections. E.g. in the *Sukasamdeśa* of Lakṣmīdāsa, ed. by N.P. Unni (Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1985), it is referred to mss in the “Natuvannur Nantanasseri Muttatu” and in the “Karanattu Variyam, Payyoli”, both located in North Malabar (pp. 60-61). The ms. M4 in the critical edition of the HV is from “Alwaye, Punnokkothu Mana Library”, etc. All these places should be checked.

Beside the tracing, preservation and cataloguing of collections, the next stage should be, following the pioneering manuscriptological work of K.V. Sarma (*Manuscripts Collection of the Deśamaṅgalam Vāriyam (Kerala): An annotated catalogue*, Madras: Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, 1993, Madras Indological Series no. 2), a deeper study of the palaeography, colophons, special marks etc. of the whole of the manuscripts in Malayāḷam script (kept in and outside Kerala, e.g. Madras — numerous transcripts of Keralan mss kept in the GOML, with the original owners usually mentioned; Baroda, or Lahore - Hoshiarpur - Chandigarh — cf. for the presence of Malayāḷam mss in Northern libraries the noteworthy role of R.A. Sastri, according to Sarma 1993: xiii), in

order to better identify the original owners, scribes, dates and places of copying, and draw a historical map of manuscripts in pre-contemporary Kerala, i.e. a map of intellectual Kerala between about 1550 and 1950.