



**HAL**  
open science

# Towards a History of the BnF Collection of Tamil Manuscripts

Emmanuel Francis

## ► To cite this version:

Emmanuel Francis. Towards a History of the BnF Collection of Tamil Manuscripts. Emmanuel Francis; Eva Wilden. South-Indian Manuscripts in Hamburg and Paris: Paratexts and Provenance, TST project (ANR & DFG, 2019-2023), Dept. of Indian and Tibetan Studies, Universität Hamburg, pp.163-192, 2025. <hal-05272712>

**HAL Id: hal-05272712**

**<https://hal.science/hal-05272712v1>**

Submitted on 15 Jan 2026

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire HAL, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 - Attribution - Non-commercial use - No Derivative Works - International License

# **South-Indian Manuscripts in Hamburg and Paris: Paratexts and Provenance**

TST Project (ANR & DFG, 2019–2023)

Edited by

Emmanuel Francis and Eva Wilden



INDIAN AND TIBETAN STUDIES 17

Hamburg • 2025

Department of Indian and Tibetan Studies, University of Hamburg



**South-Indian Manuscripts  
in Hamburg and Paris:  
Paratexts and Provenance**



INDIAN AND TIBETAN STUDIES

Edited by Harunaga Isaacson and Dorji Wangchuk

---

Volume 17

Hamburg • 2025

Department of Indian and Tibetan Studies, University of Hamburg

# **South-Indian Manuscripts in Hamburg and Paris: Paratexts and Provenance**

TST Project (ANR & DFG, 2019–2023)

Edited by

Emmanuel Francis and Eva Wilden



INDIAN AND TIBETAN STUDIES 17

Hamburg • 2025

Department of Indian and Tibetan Studies, University of Hamburg

Published by the Department of Indian and Tibetan Studies,  
Asien-Afrika- Institut, University of Hamburg, Alsterterrasse 1,  
D-20354 Hamburg, Germany  
Email: [indologie@uni-hamburg.de](mailto:indologie@uni-hamburg.de)

© Department of Indian and Tibetan Studies,  
University of Hamburg, 2025

ISBN: 978-3-945151-16-7

Francis, Emmanuel and Eva Wilden: South-Indian Manuscripts in Hamburg  
and Paris: Paratexts and Provenance, TST Project (ANR & DFG, 2019–2023)

First published 2025

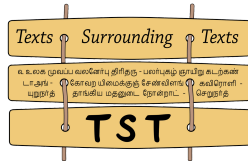
*All rights reserved.*

*Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review, no part of the book may be reproduced or translated in any form, by print, photoprint, microform or any other means without written permission. Enquiry should be made to the publishers.*

Printing and distribution:  
Aditya Prakashan, 2/18 Ansari Road, New Delhi, 110 002, India.  
Email: [contact@bibliaimpex.com](mailto:contact@bibliaimpex.com)  
Website: [www.bibliaimpex.com](http://www.bibliaimpex.com)

Printed and bound in India by Replika Press Pvt. Ltd.

The TST project (2019–2023) has been funded by DFG, Germany and ANR, France.  
TST logo by Nadia Guerguadj.



**DFG** Deutsche  
Forschungsgemeinschaft



## Contents

Introduction by Emmanuel Francis and Eva Wilden	1
<b>Part I: Paratexts</b>	
Emmanuel Francis: Blessings in Tamil Manuscripts	25
Eva Wilden: Tables of Content — What For?	57
Neela Bhaskar: Invocatory Verses of Nampi’s <i>Tiruvīlaiyātar Purāṇam</i> : A Comparison of Two Versions	75
Eva Wilden: The Distribution of Satellite Stanzas in <i>Kuraḷ</i> , <i>Nālaṭiyār</i> , and <i>Paḷamoli</i>	97
Giulia Buriola Meneghin, in collaboration with Giovanni Ciotti and Marco Franceschini: Marking up the Edges: XML TEI Encoding Strategies for Indic Colophon Collections	129
<b>Part II: History of the Collections</b>	
Emmanuel Francis: Towards a History of the BnF Collection of Tamil Manuscripts	163
Jérôme Petit: The Ochoa Collection at the BnF	193
Charles Li: Scribes, Editors, & Librarians: Between Tradition and Modernity in Late Colonial India	221
Suganya Anandakichenin: An Aperçu of Palm-Leaf Manuscripts of Śrīvaiṣṇava Provenance from the the Collection of the State and University Library in Hamburg	243
Camillo Formigatti: From the Shelves to Printed Page: Cataloguing Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Analogue Era	273
Camillo Formigatti: From the Shelves to the Web: Cataloguing Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Digital Era	309

## Contents

### **Part III: Particular Manuscripts**

T. Rajeswari: Paratexts in <i>Kalittokai</i> , <i>Kuṛiñcippāṭṭu</i> , <i>Patirruppattu</i> and <i>Pārata Māvintam</i> Manuscripts	331
S. Saravanan: Paratextual Elements Manuscripts of the <i>Collatikāram</i> of the <i>Tolkāppiyam</i>	361
Indra Manuel: Manuscripts of the <i>Poruḷatikāram</i> of the <i>Tolkāppiyam</i> in the UVS Library: A Survey	373
K. Nachimuthu: Teyvaccilaiyār's Commentary on the <i>Tolkāppiyam Collatikāram</i> and the Role of Paratexts	403
Victor B. D'Avella: Formal Translations: The Advent of <i>Citrakāvya</i> in Tamil	425
Cristina Muru: A Missionary Grammar of Tamil of the Early 17 <sup>th</sup> Century: Its History, Its Connections, and Its Main Linguistic Features	469
Margherita Trento & Jean-Luc Chevillard: Fishing for Words with Beschi in Tamil Traditional Poetical Vocabularies	501
<b>Contributors</b>	569

# Towards a History of the BnF Collection of Tamil Manuscripts

Emmanuel Francis (CNRS)

This paper a seminal study of the history of the collection of Tamil manuscripts in the BnF, providing preliminary observations on the main sub-collections by chronological order.

## 1. Introduction

The national library of France (Bibliothèque nationale de France, BnF<sup>1</sup>) in Paris has in its collections more than 650 Tamil manuscripts, which constitute the largest and the richest collection of Tamil manuscripts outside India.

The BnF collection of Tamil manuscripts is unique for several reasons. First, it started to be constituted as early as in the late 1720s, when Tamil manuscripts were dispatched to the then “bibliothèque du roi” by the Jesuits of the Carnate mission in Pondicherry. Second, it comprises the Tamil manuscripts collected between 1845 and 1854 by Édouard Ariel (acquired in 1866), who was knowledgeable in Tamil literature and was able to acquire a representative collection of Tamil texts, with several copies dating back to the eighteenth century. Had these manuscripts not entered the BnF collection at such an early date, many would probably not have survived under the South Indian climate. The BnF collection of Tamil manuscripts thus comprises, outstandingly, a significant proportion of old Tamil manuscripts.

Having spent more than 100 days examining more than 350 Tamil manuscripts in the BnF Richelieu manuscripts reading room, I venture here to offer some preliminary observations about the history of this collection.

---

<sup>1</sup> The name BnF will be used in the following pages to refer to this library under the different names it had during its long history. On the successive names of the BnF, see Petit (2014: 438, fn. 4).

To assess the provenance of the BnF Tamil manuscripts the summary catalogue by Cabaton (1912) provided the first information. This had been complemented perusing the BnF entry registers (acquisitions and donations) as well as earlier handlists and catalogues. We will introduce these precious sources first, before discussing the main identified sub-collections of BnF Tamil manuscripts.

## 2. Handlists and Catalogues

Various lists of books sent by the Jesuits of the Carnate Mission contain Tamil manuscripts. These dispatch lists, apparently by the hand of Le Gac, the head of the Pondicherry mission, describe the successive consignments of books:

- The “Memoire des Livres Malabares et Talanga envoyés en France par les Peres Jesuites de Pontichery, pour être mis à la Biblioteque du Roy” (NAF 5442, f5rv<sup>2</sup>) concerns the books sent in 1729 and 1730.
- The “Memoire des Livres Tamouls et Talanga envoyés en France pour la Biblioteque du Roy par les Peres Jesuites de la mission de Carnate” (NAF 5442, f9rv<sup>3</sup>; **fig. 1**) concerns the books sent in 1729, 1730, 1732, and 1733. It thus partly covers the preceding list, but orders the manuscripts differently.
- The “Memoire des Livres malabares, envoyés à la Biblioteque du Roy, par les Peres Jesuites de Pontichery en janvier 1734” (NAF 5442, f11rv<sup>4</sup>) concerns the books sent in 1734. A marginal note records their entry in the library on April 10th, 1737, after they had been lost from sight.
- The “Etat des Livres Malabares envoyés à la Biblioteque du Roy par les Peres Jesuites de Pontichery en 1735” (NAF 5442, f13r<sup>5</sup>)

---

<sup>2</sup> <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105278700/f17>>

<sup>3</sup> <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105278700/f31>>. Published in Omont (1902: 1188–1190).

<sup>4</sup> <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105278700/f35>>. Published in Omont (1902: 1190–1191).

<sup>5</sup> <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105278700/f39>>. Published in Omont (1902: 1191–1192).



patch lists have also been used and compiled by Burnouf (BnF Papiers Burnouf 34, f134rv) and by Feer (Indien 578, U1, f1–f2<sup>7</sup>).

In February 1845, Velanguani Arokium (Vēḷāṅkaṇṇi Ārōkkiyam), a Catholic Christian from Pondicherry,<sup>8</sup> completed, most probably in Paris, a handwritten “catalogue” of Tamil manuscripts (BnF NAF 5443), in two parts:<sup>9</sup>

- A first list (f2r–f4v) describes 26 items (nos. 1–6, 8–27; no. 7 is missing), comprising most, if not all, of the Reydellet manuscripts received in 1833.<sup>10</sup> Manuscripts described in this list bear corresponding numbers (in black ink usually) on their first folio.
- A second list describes the Ducler manuscripts acquired in 1833 (f5r–f10r, 38 items, nos. 1–38). This list has been continued by another hand (f10v–f11r, nos. 39–47), adding 9 manuscripts, that is, 7 from the Arsenal library and 2 from the Sainte Geneviève library.

In fact, Velanguani Arokium does not describe manuscripts but summarises Tamil works with references to manuscript copies recently arrived in the BnF.

In the late 1860s,<sup>11</sup> Julien Vinson, made a handwritten catalogue of Tamil manuscripts in two parts:

- Indien 1061 contains first the biographical accounts of Ducler and Ariel, followed by the description of Tamoul 1–132 (old shelfmark), that is, Indien 1–132 (new shelfmark).
- Indien 1062 contains the description of Tamoul 133–204 (old shelfmark), that is, Indien 133–204 (new shelfmark).

This handwritten draft version has corrections in red ink. It contains sometimes very detailed descriptions of Tamoul 1–204, which

<sup>7</sup> <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10536333r/f7>>.

<sup>8</sup> This information appears on the title page, by a later hand (<<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10527869m/f11>>).

<sup>9</sup> On this catalogue, see also Colas & Colas-Chauhan (1995: 21, fn. 104).

<sup>10</sup> All the Reydellet manuscripts (27 items, see below) have not been traced yet.

<sup>11</sup> Vinson prepared this catalogue between 1865 and 1867, according to Colas & Colas-Chauhan (1995: 13, 21), between 1866 and 1867, according to Feer (?) (BnF Indien 577, title page, <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105375868/f7>>).

exist in the form of printed proof-reading sheets, which however were never published. These proof-readings are available in two copies: one is not corrected (Vinson 1868), and the other, corrected, is included in Indien 577 (U1), that is, Vinson et al. (1866–). The latter copy is completed (U2) with pasted handwritten description by Vinson for Tamoul 205–496, that is, Indien 205–496 (new shelfmark).

Following Vinson, Léon Feer, in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century continued the descriptions of the BnF Tamil manuscripts, that is, Tamoul 497–574. These summary descriptions are also found in Indien 577 (U3), whereas Indien 578, mentioned above for its compiled list of manuscripts sent by the Pondicherry Jesuits (U1), also contains an alphabetical list of Tamil manuscripts (U2) by Feer.<sup>12</sup>

In 1912, the *Catalogue sommaire des manuscrits Indiens, Indo-Chinois & Malayo-Polynésien*s by Cabaton was published. This catalogue, based on Vinson’s and Feer’s earlier descriptions, contains summary descriptions of the Tamil manuscripts, under their new shelfmarks “Indien” instead of “Tamoul”.<sup>13</sup> The copy of this catalogue, which covers Indien 1–936, available in the BnF manuscript reading room, contains further handwritten descriptions up to Indien 1064, which sometimes indicate provenance.

Today, in the era of digital humanities, more than half of the approximately 650 Tamil manuscripts of the BnF are now described, in unprecedented minute details, in the TST online catalogue, accompanied by digital images linked to the descriptions.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10536333r/f15>>

<sup>13</sup> This shelfmark conversion entailed some numbers’ reallocation and also some confusion, complicated by the fact that Vinson’s shelfmarks (in Vinson et al. 1866–) for Tamoul 205–496 are themselves updated numbers (the older “Tamoul” shelfmark is crossed-out and replaced by a new “Tamoul” shelfmark). For instance, Tamoul 159 became Indien 168, whereas Indien 159 is currently unattributed. As for Tamoul 168, I have not been able to trace it. Cabaton also abridged the information found in Vinson’s catalogues. For instance, as noted by D’Avella (2020: 232 fn26), in respect of approximate dates by Vinson, “Cabaton usually drops “vers” [that is, “approximately”] so that one has the impression that the date is based on more precise evidence than it is.”

<sup>14</sup> <<https://tst-project.github.io/mss>>. A growing portion of these descriptions is currently being exported to the online BnF manuscripts catalogue (<<https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/pageCollections.html?col=1>>). Any

Let us now, on the basis of the provenance information gathered from these different registers, handlists and catalogues, describe the main sub-collections of Tamil manuscripts, by date of entry in the BnF collections.

### 3. “Ancien Fonds” (before 1739)

According to Cabaton (1912), based on Vinson and Feer, there are 18 Tamil manuscripts (mostly paper ones) from the “Ancien fonds” (Indien 189, 190, 192, 222–223, 227, 257–258, 268, 339, 410, 421, 430, 451, 454, 459–460, 463), that is, manuscripts described in the 1739 *catalogus*, as *codices indici*.<sup>15</sup> As it appears, these manuscripts are in fact among those sent from 1729 up to at least 1735 (up to 1737 according to Omont 1902: 850), by the Jesuits of the Carnate Mission at Pondicherry for the “bibliothèque du roi” in Paris. From the available lists by Le Gac, mentioned above and collated by Feer (Indien 578, see above), more of these can be identified, surely or tentatively, that is, Indien 259, 275–276, 297, 338, 410, 422, 452, 453, 481, 563a, 502.

What follows is the list of these manuscripts, traced thanks to the dispatch lists, handwritten lists and printed catalogues. They are referred to by date of dispatch and number in the dispatch list found in NAF 5442, f9rv; summary of description in dispatch lists; cod. ind. number in 1739 *catalogus*, if assessed; BnF Indien number; title in the manuscript:<sup>16</sup>

- 1729.1: “Bible en Malabar ou Tamoul” = cod. ind. 1 = Indien 451–453 (**fig. 2**): *Callāpaṅkaḷ*, that is, “dialogues,” based on the Old Testament. This is a 3-volume palm-leaf manuscript described as a single manuscript in the 1739 *catalogus*: “codex corticeus, quo continentur Veteris Testamenti libri, nempe Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numeri, Deuteronomium, Jofue, Judices, Ruth,

---

further descriptions (or updated descriptions) will be available on the TST online catalogue only.

<sup>15</sup> On the acquisition of Indian manuscripts for the “bibliothèque du roi” at the initiative of Abbé Bignon, see Omont (1902: 828ff.) and, on the Telugu manuscripts specifically, Colas (1997, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> See growing list on <<https://tst-project.github.io/collections/bnf/ancienfonds>>.

quatuor libri regum, Paralipomena, Eſdras, Tobias, Eſther, Judith, Job, Machabaei; omnia in linguam Malabaricam feu Tamulicam translata.” Indien 451 contains dialogues based on Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, Indien 452 on Joshua, Judges, Kings 1, and Kings 2, and Indien 453 on Kings 4, Paralipomenon, Ezra, Tobit, Esther, Judith, Job, and Maccabee. Richard (1989) convincingly argues that this multi-volume manuscript could be the oldest known translation of the Bible into Tamil, made between 1666 and 1677 by the capuchin fathers Ephrem de Nevers (1607/10–1695) and Zénon de Baugé (1603?–1687).

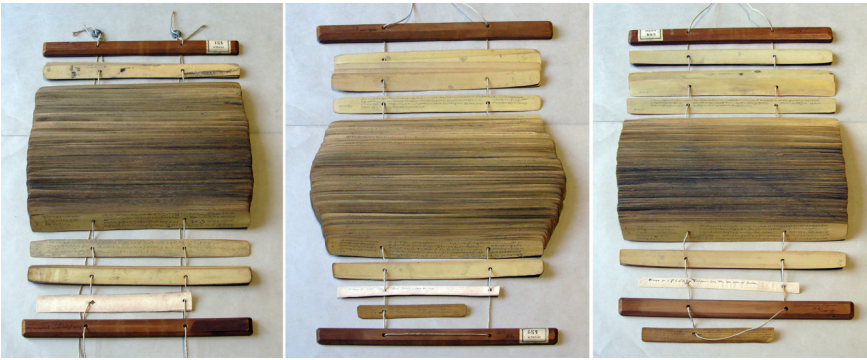


Fig. 2. Indien 451–453. Photos by Emmanuel Francis.

- 1729.2: “Un nouveau Testament de même [= en Malabar ou Tamoul]” = cod. ind. 3 = Indien 454: *Callāpaṅkaḷ* (palm-leaf), that is, “dialogues,” based the New Testament.
- 1729.5: “Vicramarkenkadey” (palm-leaf) = cod. ind. 13 = Indien 422: a palm-leaf *Vikkiramātittaṅ Patumaikkatai*, that is, a Tamil version of the *Vikramacarita*. There are two palm-leaf manuscripts of the Vikrama stories in Tamil in the BnF, both without known provenance. Indien 422 is dated to 1775 according to Vinson (in Vinson et al. 1866–), whereas Indien 424 is not dated by Vinson, but contains in fact a colophon in the *Maṅmata* year of the Jovian cycle, which could correspond to 1715–1716, 1775–1776, 1835–1836 CE.<sup>17</sup> It appears that Vinson

<sup>17</sup> *maṅmata* {varuṣam} Āṅi {mācam} 17 {tēti} maṅkaḷavārat=til kāṅiyāmpāk=kam

associated, by oversight, the colophon information found in Indien 424 to Indien 422. Indien 422 appears as the best option as it bears a shelfmark “N° 13” in black ink (U1), which seems to correspond to cod. ind. 13, and as the copyist is a Christian, as attested by the blessings he used.<sup>18</sup>

- 1729.6: “le même [= Vicramarkenkadey]” (paper) = cod. ind. 14 = Indien 421: a paper *Vikkiramātittaṅ Patumaikkatai*.
- 1729.7: “un tome du grand Catéchisme du P. Nobilibus imprimé” & 1730.3: “un tome du grand Catéchisme du P. Nobilibus écrit à la main” = cod. ind. 5–6 = Indien 459 (Kāṅṭam 1–2) and Indien 460 (Kāṅṭam 3): a paper *Ñāṅayupātēcam / Ñāṅōpatēcam* by Nobili, in two volumes.<sup>19</sup>
- 1729.8: “une grammaire tamoul” = cod. ind. 207 = Indien 189: a Tamil Grammar by Father de La Lâne, written in 1728 in Pondicherry on paper.<sup>20</sup>
- 1729.10: “Candapouranam Kadey” = Indien 338: a paper *Kantapurāṅakkatai*.
- 1729.11: “Chittiracadey” = Indien 430: a paper *Cittirakkaṭaikaḷ*. Margherita Trento pointed out to me the recent edition of this text (*Cittirakkaṭaikaḷ* 2021) attributed by the editors to Beschi.

---

*mutalippillai citamparaṅātamutaliyar kumaṅ mutalippil(l)ai Appu In-ta muppat-tu reṅṅu kataiyu=M Eḷuti mutin=tatu mut=tum (U1, f40r4).*

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. *Ēcu-mariyē tuṅai* (U1, f94v4).

<sup>19</sup> See letter by Le Gac, dated 1729, in Omont (1902, p. 838): “Dans le peu de temps que j’ay eu pour faire cette recherche, j’ay fait transcrire quelques livres gentils. J’envoye le grand Catéchisme, que le P. Robert de Nobilibus a composé en deux tomes.” Le Gac’s list NAF 5442, f5r states for 1729.4 (= 1729.7 of Le Gac’s list NAF 5442, f9r) “le 2<sup>e</sup> et 3<sup>e</sup> Tome du grand Catechisme du Pere de nobilibus de la comp<sup>e</sup> fondateur de la mission de Madurey et font imprimés” and for 1730.1 (= 1730.3 of Le Gac’s list NAF 5442, f9r) “le 1<sup>er</sup> Tome du grand Catechisme du Pere de nobilibus en malabare ecrits à la main sur du papier qui traitte de la faussetée des Dieux de ces Indes et de l’existence du vray Dieu”. This description does not match the contents of the 2 volumes as they are, since the Kāṅṭams are differently distributed between the two volumes, both manuscripts. The mention “imprimé” (printed) in the dispatch lists appears to refer to the antigraphs.

<sup>20</sup> See also 1729.9 = Indien 634, a Telugu Grammar by the same Father de La Lâne, written in 1729 in Pondicherry on paper.

- 1730.1: “Maha Baratam” = cod. ind. 21 = Indien 268: a paper *Makāpāratam Urai*, that is, in fact, a prose rendering of the *Villipāratam*.
- 1730.2: “Bagavatam” = cod. ind. 22 = Indien 259: a paper *Pākavatam*, that is, in fact, a Tamil prose version of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*.
- 1730.4: “Panja tantri cadey” = cod. ind. 23 = Indien 410: a paper *Pañcatantirakkatai*, that is, a Tamil prose version of the *Pañcatantra*.
- 1730.5: “Gnana moarchi” = cod. ind. 24 = Indien 463: a paper *Ñānamuyarci*, a work by Bertoldi, inspired by Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises* (Trento 2022: 87ff.).
- 1730.6: “Veda Velaccam” = cod. ind. 25 = Indien 481: a paper *Vētaviḷakkam*, that is, a refutation of Lutheranism by Beschi (Trento 2022: 113ff.). The manuscript contains a colophon,<sup>21</sup> but it is not clear however if the date is that of the composition of the work, that of the copy of the manuscript or even both. Trento (2022: 114, fn. 60) suggests that this manuscript could be an autograph by Beschi.
- 1730.7: “Dictionnaire Tamoul et Portuguais” = cod. ind. 204 = Indien 222: “Vocabulario tamulico lusitano”. This is a paper copy of Antaõ de Proença’s Tamil-Portuguese dictionary of 1679.
- 1730.8: “Dictionnaire Portuguais et Tamoul” = cod. ind. 205 = Indien 223: “Vocabulario tamulico lusitano”. This is a paper Portuguese-Tamil dictionary, probably based on the preceding.
- 1733.7: “histoire de Cochalaven” = cod. ind. 50 = Indien 339: a paper *Kucalavarkaḷuṭaiya Katai*, a work by Cañciviṇātar, that is, as pointed out to me by Margherita Trento, the Father Jean Venant Bouchet (1655–1732; see Clooney 2005, p. 74). The copy was completed in 1732 by a Tamil copyist as attested by the colophon (**fig. 3**).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *tayiriyānātarācarīṣīkurucuvāmiyavarkaḷ kārtā tiruvavatārañ ceytu 1728m āṇṭil kilaka {varuṣam} vaikāci {mācam} 25 {tēti} yelākuriccimaṭattil mūvāyirattu nāṇūrṟup paṇṇiru kirantatt’ aḷavoṭu tanta payaṇ Ellārukkum naṇṟāka veluti mukintatu murrum (f152v1–5).*

<sup>22</sup> *1732m āṇṭu Āvaṇi {mācam} 28 {tēti} viyāḷakkīlamai patiṇ oru maṇikku muṇṇē Eḷuti muṭintutu. rōmāpuri cañciviṇāta-rācarīṣīkurucuvāmiyavarkaḷ Eḷuti vaitta postakamāvatu — mācillāmaṇi kumāraṇ muttuk kaiyeḷuttu (f224v4–9).*

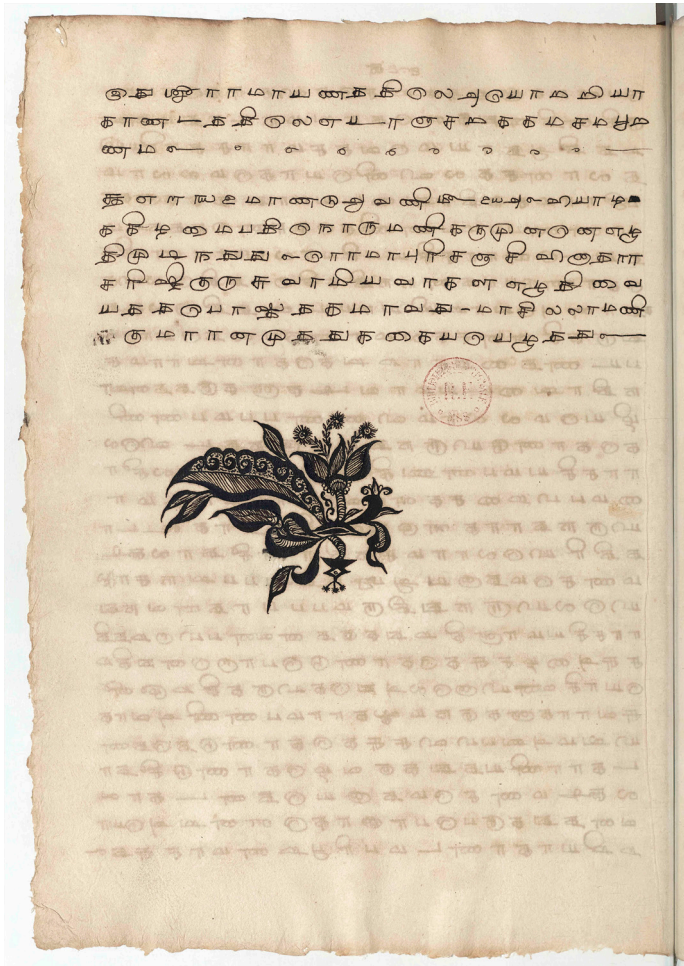


Fig. 3. Indien 339, U1, f224v. Photo retrieved from Gallica.

- 1733.9: “arounay pouranam” = Indien 297: a paper *Arunaikiripurāṇam*, that is, the text nowadays known under the title *Aruṇācalapurāṇam*, with commentary.

The identification of the following manuscripts from the dispatch lists has yet to be confirmed:

- 1729.3: “Une Instruction pour la Cène”. This is possibly Indien 563a, a single paper folio, with a marginal annotation indicating that it is copied from palm leaves.
- 1729.4: “Ramayenam”. A *Rāmāyaṇa*, but it is not clear if it is a Sanskrit or Tamil version.

- 1732.11. “Ramayanam en 2 livres”. A *Rāmāyaṇa* in two volumes, but it is not clear if it is a Sanskrit or Tamil version. Possible candidates are Indien 275–276, a two-volume paper *Kamparāmāyaṇam*.
- 1730.16: “nouvelle grammaire Tamoul”. This is possibly Indien 502 (paper).
- 1732.14: “L’ars poétique en Tamoul et le Courmapourana” = cod. ind. 210.

Besides the manuscripts mentioned in the dispatch lists, it is possible that further manuscripts arrived from Pondicherry. Indien 450 and 458, are both paper codices, from similar hands, with similar layout, and same watermarks. The first one contains *callāpaṅkaḷ*, “dialogues” based on the Bible, the second *piracaṅkaṅkaḷ*, “sermons”. Their old aspects and Christian contents make one suspect they were also sent by the Jesuits. Both manuscripts bear a documenting note stating that they arrived from Constantinople in 1738, which is close in time with the earlier dispatches from Pondicherry.<sup>23</sup>

Looking at the identified Tamil manuscripts sent by the Jesuits, one notes first that few are palm-leaf manuscripts (Indien 422, 451–453, 454), all sent in 1729. This contrasts with Colas (1997, 2012) observations about two periods in the dispatch of Telugu manuscripts, a first one (1729–1730), when paper manuscripts, copied by the Pondicherry Jesuits themselves, were sent, and a second one (1732–1735), when palm-leaf manuscripts, copied most probably by Indian copyists, that is, Hindus recently converted or in the process of being converted to Catholicism, were sent following the request made to Le Gac.

As for the contents of the manuscripts dispatched, there are only a few properly literary Tamil texts, and rarely the verse *mūlam* itself. We find prose versions of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (Indien 259) and of the *Villipāratam* (Indien 268) and, possibly, a *Kamparāmāyaṇam* (*mūlam*) (Indien 275–276). Other “Indian” texts are *katais*, narrative prose works. All, except one, are paper manuscripts and are examples of acculturation of the book, with their big size intertitles and initials at the beginning of paragraphs: the *Kantapurāṇakkatai*

---

<sup>23</sup> See Richard (1989).

(Indien 338), the *Cittirakkatai* (Indien 430), the *Pañcatantirakkatai* (Indien 410), and the *Kucalavarkaḷuṭaiya Katai* (Indien 339). The latter is the work of the Jesuit Bouchet, while the *Cittirakkatai* is possibly by Beschi. Two copies of the *Vikkiramātittan̄ Patumaikkatai*, a Tamil version of the *Vikramacarita*, were sent in 1729, one on paper (Indien 421), the other on palm-leaf (Indien 422). As the text in both appears virtually the same, one wonders if the paper copy was made from the palm-leaf copy. Furthermore, there is one *talapurāṇam*, the *Aruṇaikiripurāṇam* (Indien 297, *mūlam* and *urai*<sup>24</sup>).

Besides, Tamil grammars and lexicons were also sent: the Tamil-Portuguese dictionary of Proença (Indien 222), a Portuguese-Tamil dictionary which appears to be the preceding reversed (Indien 223), a Tamil grammar written in 1728, by P. de La Lâne.

The proportion of Christian works is telling: dialogues based on the Old and the New Testament (Indien 451–454), Nobili's catechism (Indien 259–260), Beschi's *Vētaviḷakkam* (Indien 481), Bertoldi's *Ñānamuyarcci* (Indien 463), *Kucalavarkaḷuṭaiya Katai* by Bouchet (Indien 339), and *Cittirakkatai* possibly by Beschi (Indien 430). As suggested to me by Charles Li, such texts might have been selected to prove that the missionary work was proceeding well, unless it was just not easy for the Jesuits to procure Indian texts as Colas (2012: 73) points out.

The material and contents of these manuscripts thus reflect the interests of the Jesuits (Christian texts, Tamil language studies) and indicate the kind of texts, mostly non Hindu, and the book technology, that is paper, they had access to. It is somehow ironic to see the share of Christian texts, composed and copied by Europeans. It is also noteworthy that Indien 339 was copied on paper in 1728 by Muttu, son of Mācillāmaṇi, which indicates that Indian copyists were getting used to writing on paper.

#### 4. Reydelle (1833)

According to the BnF donation register, 28 Tamil palm-leaf Hindu manuscripts were donated in 1833 by M. Reydelle, Navy officer

---

<sup>24</sup> As pointed out to me by Eva Wilden, *talapurāṇams* normally do not come with a commentary.

retired in Le Havre.<sup>25</sup> A detailed list, presented as “copie des étiquettes” (copy of the labels), is then given but comprises only 27 items (entries 24–50). This discrepancy is explained by fact that there appears to have two copies of the same text (the *Ulakanīti*), referred to only as a single item in the list. An identical list of 27 items is found bound in NAF 5441, folio 311 recto and verso, with the name spelled Reydelet.<sup>26</sup> This might be the labels reproduced in the register. As both lists are not very detailed, it has not yet been possible to identify all Reydellet manuscripts. Here are identifications and suggestions of identification for the time being, with correspondence in Velanguani Arokium’s catalogue (first numbered list):

- Reydellet register no. 39 = Reydelet list no. 16 = “justice du monde” is either Indien 76 or 77 (*Ulakanīti*), both catalogued by Velanguani Arokium (no. 17 and 20).
- Reydellet register no. 42 = Reydelet list no. 19 = “exploits de quatre rois” is Indien 420 and should have been catalogued by Velanguani Arokium (no. 7 however missing in his catalogue).
- Reydellet register no. 43 = Reydelet list no. 20 = “histoire de Tandalu” appears to be Indien 382 (*Taṇṭalaiyār Catakam*), catalogued by Velanguani Arokium (no. 11).
- Reydellet register no. 44 = Reydelet list no. 21 = “Histoire de Mouttiyan” appears to be Indien 371 (*Muttaiyaṇ Piḷḷaittamīl*), catalogued by Velanguani Arokium (no. 14).
- Reydellet register no. 46 = Reydelet list no. 23 = “Histoire de Devasagoyom” appears to be Indien 487 (*Tēvacakāya Cikāmaṇimālai*), catalogued by Velanguani Arokium (no. 4).
- Reydellet register no. 49 = Reydelet list no. 26 = “Arithmétique” appears to be Indien 434 (works of Arithmetics), catalogued by Velanguani Arokium (no. 23<sup>27</sup>).
- Reydellet register no. 50 = Reydelet list no. 27 = “Fractions” appears to be Indien 433 (*Eṇcuvāṭi*), catalogued by Velanguani Arokium (no. 22).

<sup>25</sup> The Reydelet provenance is not indicated in Cabaton’s catalogue (1912). See growing list on <<https://tst-project.github.io/collections/bnf/reydellet>>.

<sup>26</sup> <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b525018697/f548>> and following.

<sup>27</sup> See number “23bis” in black ink on Indien 434b, U3b, f{1}v.

All the above tentatively identified manuscripts have been described in Velanguani Arokium’s catalogue (Velanguani Arokium’s number is written in black ink on the manuscripts first leaf), which tends to confirm such identification as Reydellet manuscripts and calls for a minute examination of Velanguani Arokium’s catalogue to trace the manuscripts yet to be found.

### 5. Ducler (1833)

In 1833 (BnF acquisition register, entries 68–95), the BnF acquired the collection of manuscripts of Philippe Étienne Ducler (1778–1840), who had been French administrator in Karikal (1825–1831).<sup>28</sup> In total, there are 35 Tamil palm-leaf bundles, including multi-text and multi-volume manuscripts, with several copies of the same work, with or without commentary, for a total of 43 different works (Indien 44, 51–53, 91–92, 100, 179–180, 228–229, 239, 249–250, 263–264, 279–285, 290, 295, 299, 324–327, 333, 386, 397, 412, 435, 495) as well as three Sanskrit palm-leaf manuscripts (Sanskrit 290, 815, 818). From Burnouf (1832: 84–85), we learn how Ducler constituted his collection: he commissioned a learned Indian in jail for copying them on leaves imported from Sri Lanka. Ducler was not knowledgeable in Tamil literature and appears to have commissioned these manuscripts with a plan to sell them back in Europe, as shown by their title pages in French, their parallel foliation in Tamil and Arabic numbers and by the fact that most of them come with a French description of contents on a detached sheet of paper, all devices aiming at potential buyers.

The Ducler manuscripts are almost immediately recognizable from their carved wood-covers (often in ebony), their leaves (of specific colour and carefully rounded at their edges), and their parallel Tamil and Arabic foliation (**fig. 4**).

From the colophons we learn that the Tamil manuscripts were copied between 1828 and 1832, which in any case, is their *terminus ad quem*, since this is the date of their first mention (Burnouf 1832),<sup>29</sup> whereas the Sanskrit manuscripts are dated between

---

<sup>28</sup> See growing list on <<https://tst-project.github.io/collections/bnf/ducler>>. On Ducler’s biodata and collection see Francis & Vaissaire (2022).

<sup>29</sup> Indien 44, 51, 52, 91, 92, 100, 179, 180 228, 239, 249, 263–264, 279–285, 290, 295,

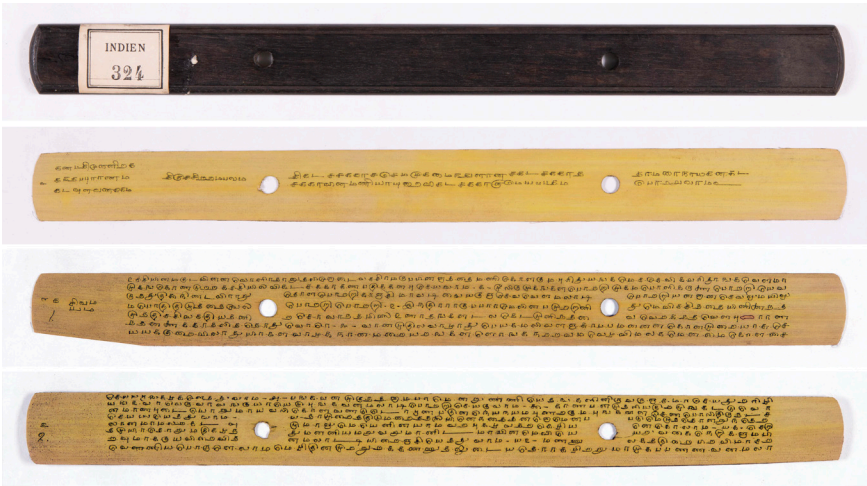


Fig. 4. A typical Ducler manuscript, Indien 324. Photo retrieved from Gallica.

1829–1830 and 1830–1831.<sup>30</sup> There were apparently two different scribes, one for Tamil and one for Sanskrit, unless the imprisoned learned Indian was skilled in both languages. The Sanskrit copyist is identified as Surakkuḍi Kṛṣṇa (Sanskrit 290) and Śorakkuḍi Kṛṣṇaśaśāstrin (Sanskrit 815 and 818, U2; **fig. 5**), thus indeed a learned Brahmin from, it seems, Corakkuṭi, a village in the Tiruvārūr district. The same copyist was also employed by Burnouf, as we will see below, or at least sold him some Sanskrit manuscripts. Two more Ducler manuscripts copyists are identified: Nārāyaṇa, is mentioned in Sanskrit 818 (colophon to U4), whereas Cavarimuttā Piḷḷai, son of Cañcīviyā Piḷḷai, copied Indien 495, but the hands comparison does not indicate for sure that he was responsible for the other Tamil manuscripts.

---

299, 324–326, 333, 397, and 435 have no internal date. The copy of Indien 229 was begun in 1828 CE. The copy of Indien 327 was completed in 1830 CE, that of Indien 412 in 1828 CE, that of Indien 495 in 1829 CE. Indien 53 is dated to the year *caruvatāri* (1828–1829 CE), Indien 250 to the year *kara* (1831–1832 CE). Indien 333 is dated to 1739 of an unspecified era, a date most probably copied from the antigraph, as the manuscript is of the same type as the others. The gouache paintings with bilingual labels (Tamil and French) also acquired from Ducler (Indien 743, 744, 746) are dated to 1831 CE.

<sup>30</sup> Sanskrit 290 is dated to the Jovian cycle year *virodhin* (1829–1830 CE), Sanskrit 815 and Sanskrit 818 to the Jovian cycle year *vikṛti* (1830–1831 CE),

The Ducler manuscripts were catalogued in 1845 by Velanguani Arokium, who could be responsible for the detached paper sheets describing in French the contents the manuscripts. The manuscripts numbers on the paper sheets and the manuscripts numbers in Velanguani Arokium catalogue match, whereas the hand is similar. Burnouf (1832: 85), however, already mentions French descriptive notes, but uses other manuscripts numbers in his list. It seems possible that Velanguani Arokium rewrote the descriptive notes when he catalogued the manuscripts in 1845.

## 6. Burnouf (1854)

According to the BnF acquisition register (entry 4955), 218 manuscripts and 53 “textes autographiés” (that is, printed editions) were acquired in 1854 from “Madame veuve Burnouf”, the spouse of the late Eugène Burnouf (1801–1852). The register indicates that all items are described in Burnouf’s library printed catalogue (s.n. 1854).

Among these manuscripts, Cabaton (1912), based on Vinson, counts 18 Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts from the Burnouf collection (Indien 45, 54, 61, 81, 178, 245, 248, 291, 315, 334, 350, 381, 393, 398, 415, 416, 417, 552).<sup>31</sup> These palm-leaf manuscripts are indeed described in Burnouf catalogue (s.n. 1854: 346–347, nos. 167–185). Cabaton sometimes indicates the corresponding number in Burnouf catalogue. The correspondence between Burnouf catalogue numbers and BnF shelfmarks has been established in most cases. However, Burnouf catalogue number 173 has not been identified, whereas, Burnouf catalogue number Burnouf 183 is possibly, but not clearly, Indien 398.

To these 18 Burnouf Tamil manuscripts bought in 1854 are to be added two more items:

- Indien 499, made of various fragments, donated in 1870 by “Madame Burnouf” (BnF donation register, entry 1350).
- Indien 561, the leaves of which are rolled, donated in 1886 by “Madame Burnouf” (BnF donation register, entry 2345, palm-leaf and paper manuscripts no. 12).<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> See growing list on <<https://tst-project.github.io/collections/bnf/burnouf>>.

<sup>32</sup> Indien 560, received at the same time and described by Cabaton as fragments

Burnouf Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts often come with notes, pasted on the covers or on detached paper sheets, describing their contents<sup>33</sup> and/or with a sticker, inscribed “BURN.” followed by a number. The contents of the notes regularly match the descriptions and manuscript numbers found in Burnouf’s catalogue (s.n. 1854) and are most probably by Burnouf.

11 of the 18 Burnouf Tamil manuscripts acquired in 1854 (Indien 45, 54, 61, 178, 245, 248, 315, 334, 393, 398, 417) appear to be by the Tamil copyist employed by Ducler, as indicated by the hand, the type of leaf and wood-covers, similar to those of Ducler manuscripts. Burnouf manuscripts however lack the parallel Tamil and Arabic foliation, as they are foliated only in Tamil. These manuscripts have no internal dates. As Ducler copyist was active in the 1830s these can be dated to *circa* 1825–1835.

All the Burnouf Tamil manuscripts by Ducler copyist have a single Tamil letter engraved on the inside of their wood-covers. Such letters appear to be shelfmarks or carpenter marks meant for linking wood-covers to their corresponding bundle. Such letters are also found on the wood-covers of Burnouf Sanskrit manuscripts (Sanskrit 613, 816, 773) and of Ducler Sanskrit manuscripts (Sanskrit 815, 818). Two Tamil manuscripts, obviously by the same copyist and having a type of leaf and wood-covers similar to those of Ducler manuscripts, likewise have a Tamil letter engraved on their wood-covers:

- Indien 972 (pointed out to me by Charles Li), which bears a sticker inscribed “M. Travers” in black ink.
- BnF Smith-Lesouëf 264 (pointed out to me by Jérôme Petit), which was part of the collection of Auguste Lesouëf (1829–1906).

As mentioned above, some of the Burnouf Sanskrit manuscripts are by Ducler Sanskrit copyist, identified as Śorakkuḍi Kṛṣṇaśāstrin (Sanskrit 816 and 847, both dated to 1832–1833; **fig. 5**). Furthermore, another Sanskrit copyist named Raṃganātha is mentioned

---

in Tamil and Singhalese has been excluded here as the examination of the original revealed that it is only in Singhalese.

<sup>33</sup> These notes are sometimes misplaced: Indien 350 = Burnouf 170 has notes describing Burnouf 164; Indien 398 has a note describing Indien 552 = Burnouf 174.

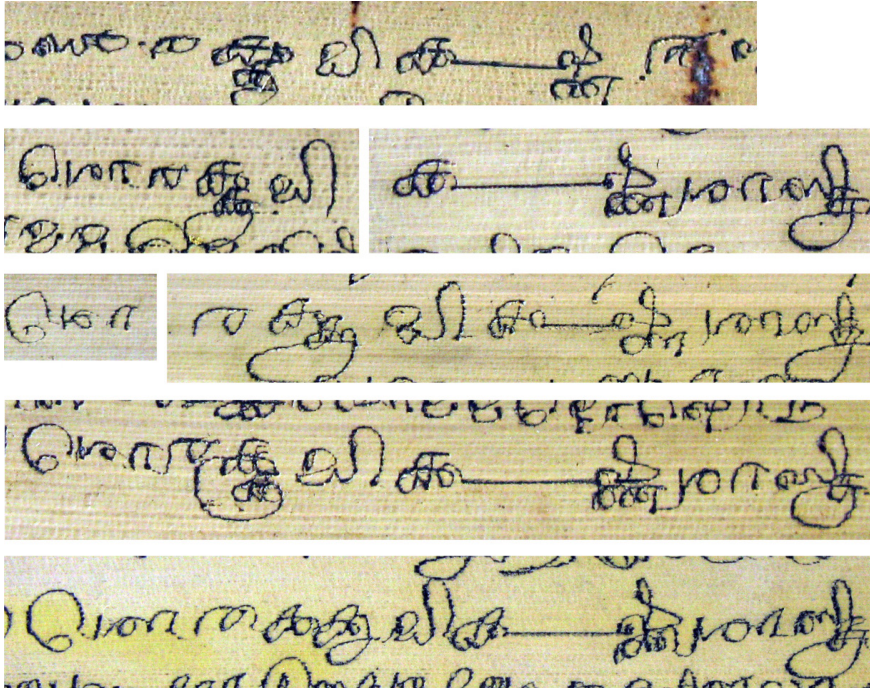


Fig. 5. Copyist's name in Sanscrit 290 (U4, f342v: *surakkuḍi kṛṣṇan-*), 815 (U3, f287r1–2: *śorakkuḍi kṛṣṇaśāstri*), 816 (U2, f201r1–2: *śorakkuḍi kṛṣṇaśāstri*), 818 (U2, f87v6: *śorakkuḍi kṛṣṇaśāstri*), and 847 (U1, f274r4: *śorakkuḍi kṛṣṇaśāstri*). Photos by Emmanuel Francis.

in the colophon of Sanscrit 846, another Burnouf manuscript also dated to 1832–1833, having the same type of leaves and wood-covers as Ducler manuscripts.

Interestingly, Ducler and Burnouf had copies of the same text apparently by the same Sanskrit copyist. The *Yajurveda Taittirīyasaṃhitā* is instantiated as Sanscrit 290 (Ducler; dated 1829–1830) and as Sanscrit 291 (Burnouf; not dated), whereas the *Pañcatappirakaraṇam* is instantiated as Indien 44 (Ducler; not dated) and as Indien 45 (Burnouf; not dated).

It is still unclear whether Ducler put Burnouf in contact with his copyist, whether Burnouf directly commissioned the manuscripts to Ducler copyist or if the latter had a stock for sale. It is in any case intriguing to see Burnouf (1832) describing the Ducler collection and pleading for its acquisition, just one year before the BnF bought it, and acquiring around the same time manuscripts by the

same copyist, whose manuscripts reached also other French customers (Travers, Lesouëf).

The other Tamil Burnouf manuscripts which are not by Ducler copyist (Indien 81, 291, 350, 381, 415, 416, 552) were probably acquired rather than commissioned by Burnouf. Few contain internal dates:

- Indien 381 is dated in the Jovian cycle year *vikrama* of the Jovian cycle, that is, 1820–1821 CE at the latest.
- Indien 552 contains commercial accounts and letters, of which several are dated to the years (*āṅṭu*) 1813 and 1814, that is, CE years.

## 7. Ariel (1866)

Édouard Ariel (1818–1854)<sup>34</sup> bequeathed by will his library to the Société Asiatique in Paris. Thirteen boxes reached destination in October 1855. A report was ordered to Rosny in 1855 and later published (Rosny 1868). Finding itself unable to properly take care of the palm-leaf manuscripts, the Société Asiatique, against the will of Ariel, gave them in 1866, along with Ariel papers, to the BnF, which was considered at that time as the most suitable place to keep and consult manuscripts, especially palm-leaf manuscripts.<sup>35</sup> Some of Ariel's papers and manuscripts are still at the Société Asiatique de Paris, where his collection of printed books is also kept.<sup>36</sup>

It is difficult to know how many manuscripts were in Ariel's collection. Rosny (1868: 191ff.) mentions Tamil, Sanskrit and Telugu manuscripts, but without figures, except for 18 Sanskrit (paper?) manuscripts.<sup>37</sup> The BnF donation register (entry 1192, August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1866) mentions 324 Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts — this figure in fact includes also paper manuscripts and probably palm-leaf Sanskrit manuscripts — , 1 Tibetan manuscript containing different parts of “Kandjour”, 1 Sanskrit manuscript in Nepalese script, and

<sup>34</sup> On Ariel's biodata and collection see Francis & Trento (2022a, 2022b).

<sup>35</sup> See *Le livre du centenaire (1822–1892)* of the Société Asiatique (s.n. 1922: 51ff.).

<sup>36</sup> See Filliozat (1945: 5–6), who lists 3 Ariel papers (his nos. 28, 40, 41) and 3 Ariel Sanskrit manuscripts (his nos. 26, 27, 46), which have remained in the Société Asiatique.

<sup>37</sup> Colas & Colas-Chauhan (1995: 106) count 3 Ariel Telugu manuscripts.

various papers, extracts, works by Ariel.<sup>38</sup> Vinson (Indien 1061) counts 305 Tamil manuscripts without further details. Cabaton (1912) counts 292 Tamil manuscripts from Ariel, that is, 241 palm-leaf manuscripts and 51 paper manuscripts (which include 11 volumes of the diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai).

From the Ariel manuscripts so far identified and examined,<sup>39</sup> the following observations can be made concerning the palm-leaf manuscripts:

- Most of their wood-covers were fabricated in the BnF. See Li (2022).
- Several are composite manuscripts, probably made by Ariel himself.
- Some appear to be elements of dismembered bundles. For instance, Indien 1 has two parallel Tamil foliations, an additional foliation 75–95 on top left margin, continuous for U2a and U2b, whereas the last 19 of the 20 folios of U2b are foliated 2–20 by the original scribe on the bottom left margin.
- Most bear an additional title-page folio (hereafter TPF, **fig. 6**), by the same hand.

These TPFs, regularly bifolios of a type a leaf different from that of the original bundle, state the contents of the bundle and share the following common structure and lay-out, from left to right:

- In the left margin is regularly found a *pillaiyār cūli* and the blessing *verrivēl urra tuṇai*.
- Then comes in one or several columns the contents of the bundle: either a single title, or a list of titles, sometimes preceded by *Ik̥tu*, “this is”, as found on the title-pages of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Tamil printed books.
- In the case of multi-text or composite manuscripts, titles for the collection are given before the list of titles contained in the bundle. For instance, *viratam mūṇru*, “Three *vratams*”, or *vētāntam Aintu*, “Five Vedānta [works]”.

---

<sup>38</sup> The register does not explicitly mention that the whole transfer from the Société Asiatique was from Ariel’s collection. It is specified only for the various papers.

<sup>39</sup> See growing list on <<https://tst-project.github.io/collections/bnf/ariel>>.



Fig. 6. Selection of Ariel title-page folios (Indien 1, 13, 66, 199). Photo retrieved from Gallica.

- A shelfmark system, in the form of a lower-case Roman letter (a, b, c, or d) followed by a number, is regularly inscribed in black ink. It is not clear yet if the letters refer, as suggested to me by Charles Li, to the size of the manuscript, as a way of organising the library shelves, or to the topic or genre of the manuscript.
- A round sticker inscribed with a number (sometimes crossed-out by a later hand) is also regularly found pasted if not on the TPF, on the front wood-cover. This constitutes another, possibly previous, shelfmark system, possibly made at the Société Asiatique as suggested to me by Jérôme Petit.

Further observations can be made about these TPFs:

- They are sometimes found outside the bundle, before the front wood-cover.
- The copyist routinely makes use of the *pulli* and of the 2-curved *kompū*.
- Some Ariel palm-leaf manuscripts do not have additional TPF, either that it was lost or never added (Indien 328) or that the original manuscript already had a TPF (e.g. Indien 67).
- Sanskrit manuscripts with BnF shelfmark “Sanskrit” (among which many have also an old shelfmark “Sanskrit Grantha”) have also a TPF, with the letter+number shelfmark, and occa-

sionally also a donation sticker (Sanskrit 253, 507) or a round sticker or a trace of it (Sanskrit 385), or both (Sanskrit 356). These appear to be unacknowledged Ariel manuscripts.<sup>40</sup> That the BnF register mentions only one Sanskrit manuscript in the Ariel bequest would mean that these manuscripts were first wrongly identified as Tamil manuscripts.

- Similar TPFs are found in Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts without known provenance. These could also be unacknowledged Ariel manuscripts.
- The information on the TPF sometimes does not correspond to the content of the bundle. For instance, the TPF of Indien 187 mentions the *Pirayōkavivēkam*, but the bundle contains four other grammatical works.<sup>41</sup> This might be another case of dismembered bundle.
- Indien 74, a composite manuscript, has two additional TPFs: one for the whole composite and one for the second element of the composite alone (a single text).
- There are cases of corrected TPFs. For instance, Indien 30, a composite manuscript, bears on its TPF a corrected generic title *caivam* [[*mūnru*]] *nānku*, followed by a list of 4 titles. However only 2 of these titles are found in the bundle, while the third element of the composite consists in 3 folios with *Tiruvācakam* stanzas, not mentioned on the TPF. As for the TPF of Indien 135, it bears a list of texts on its recto and another one, crossed-out, on the verso. The recto is the corrected version, with the replacement of the author's name (Urōmariṣi, as in the original manuscript, instead of Irāmatēvar) for the last 3 of the 5 titles (fig. 7).

Who is responsible for these additional TPFs? A first possibility is that Ariel acquired an already existing collection, furnished with additional TPFs, but there is no hint in this direction. As for an addition made after the arrival of the manuscripts in Paris, at the Société Asiatique or at the BnF, it seems unlikely as, presumably,

---

<sup>40</sup> The same letter+number shelfmark can be found for two different manuscripts, one in Tamil and the other in Sanskrit. See for instance BnF Sanscrit 808 and BnF Indien 948, both marked “c/2”.

<sup>41</sup> See further details in D'Avella (2020: 241–242).

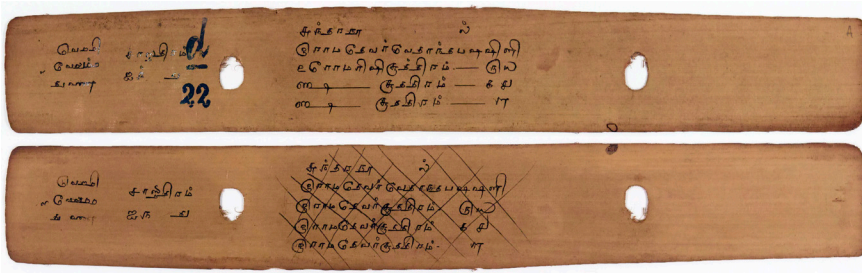


Fig. 7. Title-page folio of Indien 135, recto and verso. Photo retrieved from Gallica.

no palm leaf nor traditional Indian copyist were available there. The more reasonable option is that, after the acquisition of the manuscripts, Ariel catalogued them, dismembered some of them, created composite manuscripts, devised a shelfmark system and had the additional TPFs written. It is even possible that the additional TPFs were made before the acquisition of the manuscripts, that is, Ariel made a list of the works he wanted a copy of, had TPFs prepared, grouping sometimes several works he wanted to have in a single bundle. This could explain the corrections made on some the TPFs: text copies could not be found and had to be crossed-out on the TPFs, or the copies found showed that the text was by an author different from the one first thought.

Ariel, in any case, was aware of the shelfmark system and used it. This is proved by Indien 162, an Ariel paper manuscript, which contains 23 *curukkams*, that is, epitomes of larger works. Their respective title pages regularly bear on top the letter+number shelfmark, with the difference that the letter is here upper-case. The title-page of the *Kantapurāṇaccurukkam* (f20r) bears not only “B/2” on its top but also, at the bottom, apparently by the hand of Ariel, “b.2”, “b.55” and “imp. B.18”:

- “b.2” seems to refer with lower-case to the present *Kantapurāṇaccurukkam* (3<sup>rd</sup> *curukkam* in Indien 162).
- “b.55” appears to refer to Indien 336, an Ariel palm-leaf manuscript copy of the *Kantapurāṇaccurukkam*, which bears the shelfmark “b/55” on its additional TPF.
- “B.18” appears to refer to a printed edition of the *Kantapurāṇaccurukkam*, as Ariel also used such shelfmarks for his

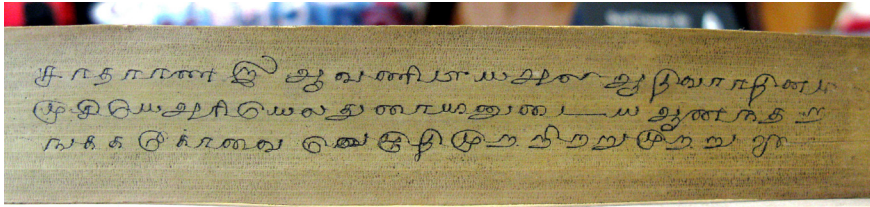
printed books, as shown in some of these kept in the Société Asiatique.<sup>42</sup>

Such were my preliminary observations when new evidence surfaced, in January 2024, while examining BnF Indien 387. This copy of the *Aṅantaraṅkakkōvai* (a work composed in honour of Āṅantaraṅkam Piḷḷai) ends with the following colophon (**fig. 8**):

*cātāraṇa {varuṣam} Āvaṇi {mācam} 18 {tēti} Ātivāraṭiṇam  
muciyē Ariyel turaiyinuṭaiya Āṅantara  
ṅkakkōvai veluti murrirru murrum{pcl}*

In the year Cātāraṇa, month of Āvaṇi, day 18, a Sunday, the copy of the *Aṅantaraṅkakkōvai* of Monsieur Ariel Turai was completely completed.<sup>43</sup>

This colophon, dated Sunday, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1850 CE, attests that Ariel himself directly commissioned at least one manuscript copy for his collection.



**Fig. 8.** Final colophon of Indien 387, f101v. Photo by Emmanuel Francis.

Furthermore, the title page of the manuscript – which, unlike other title pages added to manuscripts acquired by Ariel, appears to be original – bears a letter+number shelfmark (“b/8”),<sup>44</sup> which proves almost definitely that this shelfmark system is not anterior to Ariel.

From a preliminary survey of the TPFs, it is possible to estimate the minimum possible total of palm-leaf manuscripts using the

<sup>42</sup> Ariel also used such shelfmarks for his paper codices, with the difference that the reference is made of two letters, the first upper-case and the second lower-case, followed by a number.

<sup>43</sup> <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b525164454/f206>>

<sup>44</sup> <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b525164454/f3>>

shelfmark system, by looking at the higher number so far found for each letter:

	Letter a	Letter b	Letter c	Letter d	Total
Highest number (found so far)	31	95	85	49	260

This total of 260 is below any figure given for the total of Ariel Tamil manuscripts: 324 palm-leaf and paper manuscripts (BnF Register), 305 manuscripts (Vinson), 292 manuscripts (Cabaton). Cabaton more precisely counts 241 palm-leaf and 51 paper manuscripts. The discrepancy between the figures 241 and 260 might be explained by the fact that Cabaton was not able to trace all the Ariel palm-leaf manuscripts.

As for the contents of the manuscripts, they show that Ariel gathered his collection with the aim to obtain a copy of each identified important text. Ariel mostly bought them, apparently by batches from one or several pre-existent collections.<sup>45</sup> He commissioned at least one new copy and probably others, as shown by a list of texts, found in his papers (Indien 164, folio 239 recto<sup>46</sup>), by the hand of a certain B. Gnanappragassen (Ñāṇappirakācaṅ), writing in French from Cumbaconam (Kumpakōṇam). The list provides the number of “grandams”, that is, *granthas*, literally “verses”, per text and a grand total of *granthas*. Ñāṇappirakācaṅ states that 1000 *granthas* cost 1 rupee and concludes that he is confident he could get a better price.

The Ariel manuscripts are in any case the most impressive sub-collection of Tamil manuscripts in the BnF by its range — for instance, there is a copy of most of the important Tamil grammars — and the early dates of many manuscripts.

## Conclusion

It is interesting to observe, as pointed out to me by Charles Li, that the collection of Tamil manuscripts in Paris started at the initia-

<sup>45</sup> For instance, several undated Ariel manuscripts are by the same hand. See e.g. those with the *vēyurūtōḷipañkaṅ tunai* blessing, *supra*, p. 35.

<sup>46</sup> <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b100294573/f485>>.

tive of someone (Bignon, the librarian of the king) who could not read Tamil at all and who, when first receiving paper manuscripts, asked for “authentic” Indian manuscripts on palm leaf (Colas 2012: 74). As Colas puts it (2012: 77), an Indian manuscript, that is, an Indian book, was an “exotic curio”, but no one in Paris could read them anyway. As for Ducler, it appears that he aimed at constituting a ‘canonical’ collection of Tamil texts as palm-leaf manuscripts, with the view to sell it back in the metropolis. Eventually, the collection of Tamil manuscripts turned into a scholarly endeavour, with scholars, such as Burnouf and, most importantly, as Ariel, to whom Paris owes to be, outside India, the most astounding repository of Tamil manuscripts.

Much remains to be done to assess the history of the collection of Tamil manuscripts of the BnF. Among the tasks ahead are tracing the yet untraced manuscripts from the above sub-collections and assessing the other, smaller, sub-collections. Furthermore, to assess the dates of the manuscripts, at least a *terminus ad quem*, one should track register marks on the manuscripts, study the BnF stamps with the help of Josserand & Bruno (1960), examine the binding of the codices,<sup>47</sup> as well as assess the exact CE of the internal dates given in Jovian cycle years. I hope to be able in the future to tackle these tasks.

### Acknowledgements

The present preliminary survey would not have been possible without the kind help of Jérôme Petit, Laurent Héricher and all the BnF staff. A very special thanks to Jérôme Petit, who shared with me data he collected from the BnF registers and who, notably, pointed out to me the Reydellet manuscripts; to Charles Li, who pointed out to me the title-page folios of BnF “Sanskrit” shelfmark manuscripts using the letter+number system; to Margherita Trento who enlightened me about Christian Tamil works. Thanks to Charles Li, Jérôme Petit and Eva Wilden who commented upon a draft of the present paper.

---

<sup>47</sup> Many codices appear to have been bound in the BnF. Some covers bear the date of binding or a royal emblem, which can be associated to a specific king and his period of reign.

## Conventions

The BnF manuscripts are referred to above by their current BnF shelfmarks, that is, “Indien” or “Sanskrit” or “NAF”, followed by accession number. In case the manuscript is a composite manuscript a letter follows immediately the accession number. Further details are provided as follows: “U” followed by a number or a number+letter to indicate the codicological/textual unit (e.g. “U1,” “U2a,” “U2b”; note that these units’ numbers might in the future be updated and changed); “f” for folio, immediately followed by folio number and “r” or “v”, for recto or verso (e.g. “f1r5” = folio 1, recto, line 5). {1} stands for non-explicit foliation 1.

As the corresponding CE year of the internal dates provided in Jovian cycle year has not yet been assessed in most of the cases, the *terminus ad quem* double CE year only is provided here.

The original texts are provided in transliteration, according to the following conventions:

Roman	for characters in Tamil script
Bold	for characters in Grantha script
Upper-case (vowel)	initial vowel
C=C	conjunct consonant (C = consonant; e.g. <i>k=ku</i> , <i>t=ta</i> )
=M / =Ma	consonant <i>m</i> or <i>ma</i> appended as conjunct
(abc)	characters not clearly legible
[abc]	lost characters supplied by conjecture
⟨abc⟩	characters omitted by the copyist and supplied
[[abc]]	scribal deletion
{varuṣam}	word expressed by a symbol

## References

- BnF entry register, acquisitions. *Registre des entrées du département des Manuscrits: acquisitions.*
- BnF entry register, donations. *Registre des entrées du département des Manuscrits: dons.*
- Burnouf, Eugène. 1832. “Rapport fait au Conseil, dans la séance du 2 juillet 1832, sur les collections de manuscrits et de dessins rapportées de

- l'Inde par M. Ducler, administrateur de Carical, membre de la Société asiatique.” *Journal Asiatique* 10: 84–91.
- Cabaton, Antoine. 1912. *Catalogue sommaire des manuscrits indiens, indo-chinois & malayo-polynésiens*. Bibliothèque nationale. Département des manuscrits. Paris: E. Leroux. — See <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10329763p>> for the supplemented version, containing handwritten additions.
- Cittirakkataikaḷ*. 2021. *Cittirakkataikaḷ: 1730ām āṅṅu kaiyeḷutta āvaṅṅattin accuvaṅṅivam*. Edited by Ka. Cupāṅṅiṅi & Anant Amalatās. Ceṅṅai: Eḷiḷiṅi Patippakam.
- Colas, Gérard & Usha Colas-Chauhan. 1995. *Manuscrits Telugu. Catalogue raisonné*. Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France.
- Colas, Gérard. 1997. “Les manuscrits envoyés de l’Inde par les jésuites français entre 1729 et 1735”. In *Scribes et manuscrits du Moyen-Orient* edited by François Déroche and Francis Richard, 345–362. Paris, France: Bibliothèque nationale de France.
- Colas, Gérard. 2012. “A Cultural Encounter in the Early 18th Century: The Collection of South Indian Manuscripts by the French Jesuit Fathers of the Carnatic Mission.” In *Aspects of Manuscript Culture in South India* edited by Saraju Rath, 69–80. Brill’s Indological Library 40. Leiden; Boston: Brill.
- D’Avella, Victor. 2020. “Orbiting Material in Tamil Grammatical Texts”. In *Colophons, Prefaces, Satellite Stanzas: Paratextual Elements and Their Role in the Transmission of Indian Texts* edited by Eva Wilden & Suganya Anandakichenin, 223–279. Hamburg: Universität Hamburg.
- Filliozat, Jean. 1945. “Catalogue des manuscrits sanskrits et tibétains de la Société Asiatique”. *Journal Asiatique* 223 (1941–1942): 1–81.
- Francis, Emmanuel & Lola Vaissaire. 2022. “Ducler, Philippe Étienne (1778–1840)”. <<https://heritage.bnf.fr>>.
- Francis, Emmanuel & Margherita Trento. 2022a. “ARIEL Édouard”. <<https://agorha.inha.fr/detail/412>> (accessed 2022/11/02).
- Francis, Emmanuel & Margherita Trento. 2022b. “ARIEL ÉDOUARD (1818–1854)”. <<https://heritage.bnf.fr>>.
- Josserand, Pierre & Jean Bruno. 1960. “Les estampilles du Département des imprimés de la Bibliothèque nationale. In *Mélanges d’histoire du livre et des bibliothèques offerts à Monsieur Frantz Calot*, 261–298. Paris: Librairie d’Argences.
- Li, Charles. 2022. “The *ébéniste inconnu* of the palm leaf manuscript collection”. Blogpost. <<https://tst.hypotheses.org/2707>> (accessed 2024–10–01)
- Liyanaratne, Jinadasa (1983). *Catalogue des manuscrits singhalais*. Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale.

- Omont, Henri. 1902. "XIV Missions en Chine et dans l'Inde. Fourmont aîné, les PP. Fouquet et de Prémare, Signard et le P. Le Gac (1684–1737)." In *Missions archéologiques françaises en Orient aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles. Seconde partie*, 806–851. Paris: Imprimerie nationale.
- Petit, Jérôme. 2009. "État du fonds de manuscrits indiens à la Bibliothèque interuniversitaire des Langues Orientales". *Bulletin d'Études Indiennes* 24–25 (2006–2007): 191–206.
- Petit, Jérôme. 2014. "Les savants occidentaux, lecteurs et (re)copistes des manuscrits orientaux: Eugène Burnouf, Léon Feer, Julien Vinson". In *Lecteurs et copistes dans les traditions manuscrites iraniennes, indiennes et centrasiatiques* edited by Nalini Balbir & Maria Szuppe, 437–459. Roma: Istituto per l'Oriente Carlo Alfonso Nallino & Halle: Orientalisches Institut der Martin-Luther-Universität.
- Richard, Francis. 1989. "Ephrem de Nevers et Zénon de Baugé, premiers auteurs français d'ouvrages catholiques en tamoul" *Moyen-Orient & Océan Indien = Middle East & Indian Ocean XVIe-XIXe s.* 6: 151–163.
- Rosny, Léon de. 1868. "La bibliothèque tamoule de M. Ariel, de Pondichéry". In *Variétés orientales*, 177–224. Paris: Maisonneuve.
- S.n. 1739. *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum Bibliothecae regiae. Tomus primus. Pars prima, complectens codices manuscriptos orientales*. Paris: Typographia Regia. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k140995x>>
- S.n. 1854. *Catalogue des livres imprimés et manuscrits composant la bibliothèque de Feu M. Eugène Burnouf*. Paris: Duprat.
- S.n. 1922. *Société Asiatique. Le livre du centenaire (1822–1892)*. Paris: Geuthner.
- Trento, Margherita. 2022. *Writing Tamil Catholicism: Literature, Persuasion and Devotion in the eighteenth Century*. Leiden, Boston: Brill.
- Vaissaire, Lola. 2021. *Les peintures de divinités hindoues de la collection Philippe Étienne Ducler (1778–1840). Étude des feuillets 1 à 108 du manuscrit «Indien 744» conservé à la Bibliothèque nationale de France*. MA thesis. Ecole du Louvre.
- Velanguani Arokium. 1845. *Catalogue des manuscrits tamouls de la Bibliothèque royale*. Manuscript, BnF NAF 5443. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10527869m>>
- Vinson, Julien & Feer, Léon & s.n. 1866–. *Catalogue des manuscrits tamoul et télinga*. Manuscript, BnF Indien 577. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105375868>>
- Vinson, Julien. 1868. *Manuscrits tamouls. Proofreadings of the catalogue for Tamoul 1–204*. Printed by the atelier oriental de l'Imprimerie nationale. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105333021>>. The same proofreadings with black ink handwritten corrections are found in Vinson et al. (1866–, f1–f49).
- Vinson, Julien. n.d. *Catalogue of Tamil manuscripts (1 of 2)*. Manuscript BnF Indien 1061. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10536335n>>

Vinson, Julien. n.d. Catalogue of Tamil manuscripts (2 of 2). Manuscript BnF Indien 1062. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105363346>>

### List of Figures

All photos of BnF manuscripts, either retrieved from Gallica (<<https://gallica.bnf.fr>>) or by Emmanuel Francis, by courtesy of BnF.

**Fig. 1.** NAF 5442, f9r. Photo retrieved from Gallica.

**Fig. 2.** Indien 451–453. Photos by Emmanuel Francis.

**Fig. 3.** Indien 339, U1, f224v. Photo retrieved from Gallica.

**Fig. 4.** A typical Ducler manuscript, Indien 324. Photo retrieved from Gallica.

**Fig. 5.** Copyist's name in Sanscrit 290 (U4, f342v: *surakkuḍi kṛṣṇan·*), 815 (U3, f287r1–2: *śorakkuḍi kṛṣṇaśāstri*), 816 (U2, f201r1–2: *śorakkuḍi kṛṣṇaśāstri*), 818 (U2, f87v6: *śorakkuḍi kṛṣṇaśāstri*), and 847 (U1, f274r4: *śorakkuḍi kṛṣṇaśāstri*). Photos by Emmanuel Francis.

**Fig. 6.** Selection of Ariel title-page folios (Indien 1, 13, 66, 199). Photo retrieved from Gallica.

**Fig. 7.** Title-page folio of Indien 135, recto and verso. Photo retrieved from Gallica.

**Fig. 8.** Final colophon of Indien 387, f101v. Photo by Emmanuel Francis.