
Part I: **South Asia**

South India

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Scribe, Owner, or Both? Some Ambiguities in the Interpretations of Personal Names in Colophons from Tamil Nadu

Abstract: The study of the linguistic style and register of Tamil used in colophons found in manuscripts hailing from Tamil Nadu and containing Sanskrit, Tamil and Manipravalam texts brings us to the fringes of what is the conventional use of the language. Many idiosyncrasies and systematic variations from what is today accepted as standard are met and force us to reconsider linguistic assumptions. This article focuses on personal names, their syntactic position in the colophons, and the ensuing ambiguity concerning their interpretation. Often one cannot in fact immediately decide whether they refer to scribes, owners, or individuals who played both roles.

1 Introduction

The present article stems from the ongoing research that Marco Franceschini and I are conducting on a selection of paratexts, in particular colophons and lending/borrowing statements, found in palm-leaf manuscripts from the cultural area known today as Tamil Nadu.¹ While our collaborative study (slowly but steadily) moves towards a first comprehensive study on the interpretation of such material, I would like here to discuss a particularly thorny issue that concerns personal names as they are found in colophons.²

Personal names occur sometimes in colophons, but their interpretation is not always straightforward. Several cases emerge in which it is difficult to establish whether these names refer to scribes, owners, or individuals who played both roles at the same time.

¹ See Ciotti and Franceschini 2016 and Franceschini in this volume. One may prefer the term ‘paracontent’ to that of ‘paratext’, see Ciotti et al. 2018.

² With the term ‘colophon’ we intend here (a) ‘scribal colophons’, i.e. statements that indicate the beginning or the conclusion of the scribal activity (the former kind not discussed in this article), and (b) ‘ownership colophons’, i.e. statements that indicate the owner of a given manuscript. In our research, Franceschini and I also investigate lending/borrowing statements, which are however only mentioned *en passant* in this article (see example (30)).

There are two main ambiguous occurrences of personal names. One concerns the Tamil syntactic string composed of the three modules [*personal name*] + [*title*] (or [*manuscript*]) + [*copying statement*].³ While the string [*personal name*] + [*title*] (or [*manuscript*]) can be safely understood to indicate a possessive relationship by means of an unmarked genitive to be attributed to the module [*personal name*], as is the norm in Tamil with names (e.g. *celvaṅ puttakam* would mean ‘the manuscript of Celvaṅ’), what happens when such a string is followed by the module [*copying statement*] is not obvious. Does the module [*personal name*] work as the agent of the verb (e.g. ‘Celvaṅ copied the manuscript’) or should we still read it as an ownership statement (e.g. ‘the manuscript of Celvaṅ was copied’)?

A second interpretative issue is constituted by stray personal names, i.e. names that are written in isolation and are not part of colophons, whether these are written by the same hand that copied the text(s) found in the manuscript in question or by a different hand. To whom do these names refer?

In order to tackle these interpretative issues, we will first have a look at how names of scribes and owners are most commonly expressed (§§ 2 and 3), including cases in which scribes are also owners (§ 4). Once these more easily interpretable cases are established, we will focus on the ambiguous cases just mentioned above (§ 5) and try to ascertain to whom they refer by combining codicological, palaeographical, and philological observations. We will not shy away, though, from acknowledging when our methods fail to reach a fully satisfactory solution of the problem at hand.

Before moving further, we should note that the considerations found in this article are based on part of the repository of paratexts that Marco Franceschini and I have collected, in particular on a selection of the manuscripts belonging to the collection of the IFP (Institut Français de Pondichéry / French Institute of

3 Here we use the term ‘module’ to indicate what corresponds approximately to a broad syntactic and semantic unit within a given sentence. In particular, in this article we will encounter the following modules: (a) [*personal name*], which can include not just the name of an individual, but also his ancestry and place of residence/origin; (b) [*title*], which simply indicates the title of a given text and is usually the object of the sentence; (c) [*manuscript*], which stands for any word meaning ‘manuscript’, such as *pustakam*, *grandham* (sic!), *ētu*, etc. and is also usually the object of the sentence; (d) [*copying statement*], which indicates a number of possible verbal syntagms meaning that the act of copying is completed; and (e) [*date*], which indicates the moment in time when the copying of a given manuscript was started or, far more often, concluded and contains a complex array of sub-modules, such as year, month, day, constellation (see Franceschini in this volume). Furthermore, we use the term ‘string’ to indicate any sequence of two or more of such modules.

Pondicherry), recognised by UNESCO as a ‘Memory of the World’ Collection in 2005.⁴ More specifically, we will deal with 193 manuscripts and 510 paratexts.

2 Scribes and copying

Among the personal names that can be found in colophons, those of scribes are definitely the great majority. Names of owners and other people involved in the production and use of manuscripts are in fact, unfortunately, much rarer.

As a consequence, scribes’ names are also the main source of information we have to reconstruct the social settings of our manuscript culture. In fact, though not that common, scribes’ names also come together with titles (e.g. *guru*, *periyampi*, etc.) as well as additional information concerning the place of origin or residence of the scribes, their male relatives, *gotras*, religious affiliations, etc. Just to give one example, the colophon of a copy of the *Śucīndrasthalamāhātmya* (dated 30 Dec. 1880) reads:

(1) RE05920

... **ejuśākhāddhyān śrīvatsagotrotbhave satyāṣaḍasūtraḥ** cucīndiram nārāyaṇar putran senāpati likhitam⁵

Senāpati, reciter of the Yajurveda, born in the Śrīvatsa gotra, [belonging to the tradition] of the Satyāṣaḍasūtra (read Satyāṣaḍhasūtra), son of Nārāyaṇar of Cucīndiram, copied [this manuscript].

This example also showcases one particularly characterising feature of the paratexts we are dealing with, namely the blending of Sanskrit and Tamil features, both graphic (various combinations of Tamilian Grantha and Tamil scripts) and grammatical (phonetic, morphological and syntactic).

⁴ Note that all manuscripts belonging to the IFP collection have a registration number that begins with RE.

⁵ Hereafter only the relevant parts of colophons are quoted, the omitted parts being replaced by ellipses. Tamilian Grantha script is represented in bold, whereas Tamil script is in normal characters. A number of brackets of different shapes are used to indicate that the original reading has issues and has been restored: () for symbols, [] for scribal elisions, \ / and / \ for scribal insertions, [[a→]]b for scribal emendations, < > for scribal omissions corrected by the editors, [] for damages of the support and their editorial evaluation. † † (*cruces desperationis*) are used when reading and/or interpretation have failed. A few philological observations are included in round brackets in the translations, when needed. All translations are mine, though always discussed with Marco Franceschini.

When it comes to the way of conveying that a particular person is the scribe of a given manuscript, we find a restricted variety of expressions, most of which indicate that the act of copying is completed.⁶

As for Sanskrit, the most common sentences we encounter are ended by forms of the verbal root *likh-*.⁷ Particularly popular are its past participle, i.e. *likhitam*, used with the name of the scribe mostly in the instrumental (2) and above all the compound *svahastalikhitaṃ*, which is mostly used either in a longer compound (3) or in predication with the name of the scribe mostly in the genitive case (4).⁸

(2) RE38376

... veṅkaṭa(rāma)**dikṣitena likhitaṃ** ...

Veṅkaṭarāma Dikṣita copied.

(3) RE10871

... **vedāraṇyavāsisellapaṭṭārakakumāraṇapatipaṭṭārakasvahastalikhitaṃ**

[The manuscript] copied by the hand of Gaṇapatipaṭṭāraka son of Śellapaṭṭāraka residing in Vedāraṇya.

(4) RE15533⁹

parameśvaraguroḥ svahasthalikhitaṃ

Parameśvaraguru copied with his own hand (lit. [the manuscript] copied by the hand of Parameśvaraguru).

Both *likhitam* and *svahastalikhitaṃ* can also be found in Tamil colophons, but are used as some sort of finite forms, hence in a way that is equivalent to Tamil *eḷutiṇatu* (past third person neuter of the verb ‘to copy’¹⁰). In this respect, we have for example (5) RE15554α **jñā[na]śivan likhitaṃ** ..., ‘Jñānaśivan copied’, and (6) RE05574 ... **gopālakṛṣṇan svahastalikhitaṃ**, ‘Gopālakṛṣṇan copied with his own hand’, but not ***jñānaśivanāl** *likhitaṃ* or ***gopālakṛṣṇanāl**

⁶ This is no place to list the rarer formulas that express the conclusion of copying and include the name of the scribe.

⁷ Note that the verbs *likh-* and even *vīlikh-* mean ‘to copy’; an example of the latter is found in RE30866 **gaṃgāthareṇa guruṇā vy<ā>lekhyāṃgirasābdake** (‘having been copied (*vyālekhyā*) by guru Gaṃgāthara’). The verbs *rac-* and *virac-* mean ‘to compose, to author’.

⁸ Finite forms are rarer and found mostly in colophons in metrical form.

⁹ Greek letters are added after manuscript numbers when the manuscript contains more than one paratext. They are added progressively from the beginning of the manuscript in the order paratexts have been met by Franceschini and me. For example, in the current case, RE15533y indicates the third paratext in RE15533.

¹⁰ Like the verb *likh-* in Sanskrit, in this context the Tamil verb *eḷutu-* means ‘to copy’.

svahastalikhitaṃ, i.e. with the personal name in the instrumental case.¹¹ Alternatively, one could interpret such strings as made of a personal name with an unmarked genitive, which as we mentioned in the introduction is the norm in Tamil, followed by a verbal noun. Such an interpretation could also imply that the combination of genitive + **svahastalikhitaṃ** in Sanskrit (as in (4)) in fact underlies a Tamil syntactic construction. This would mean that the previous two examples could be translated as something like ‘the copying of Jñānaśivan’ and ‘the copying of Gopālakṛṣṇan with his own hand’.¹²

Alternatively, forms of the Tamil verbal root *eḷutu-* are also often used. We may encounter both finite forms (7) and past participles (past *peyareccams* to use a partly Tamil indigenous terminology), followed for instance by a word meaning ‘manuscript’ (8).

(7) RE200478

... **nirvacanacandrikai** - **yeḷuti**[n]eṅ ...

... I copied the Nirvacanacandrikai ...

(8) RE50420

... inta **pustakam** - āṅṅākuṭṭikuraḱkaḷ (read °kuṟu° for °kuṟa°?) **kaniṣṭaṅ svāmiṇātaṅ** kayyāḷ yeḷutiṅa **pustakam** ...

... This manuscript is the manuscript that was copied by the hand of Svāmiṇātaṅ youngest son (*kaniṣṭaṅ*) of the teacher (*kuṟu*, i.e. guru) Āṅṅākuṭṭi ...

Finally, we find concluding formulas containing (9) the noun *eḷuttu* (‘[written] character’) or (10) a compound thereof, namely *kaiyeḷuttu* (‘[written] character [drawn] by hand’).

(9) RE201038

... **tyākaviṇotatenṇavan** **brahmādi**†raṭṭyaṅ **eḷuttu** ...

The writing of Tyākaviṇotatenṇavan Brahmadirayan (?).

¹¹ The spelling of *svahastalikhitaṃ* is most unstable. Just to give some examples, it can be spelled as **su**hastalikhitaṃ (RE04090β), **svay**astalikhitaṃ (RE10734α), **sak**astalikhitaṃ (RE15447γ), **sv**astilikhitaṃ (RE19988), **sost**alikhitaṃ (RE25314β) and **cuv**ahastalikhitaṃ (RE26402).

¹² Note that we do also have cases of [name] + [copying statement], where the latter is just the word *eḷutiṅatu* (and its spelling variants). For example, RE45807 icalimaṭai kopālakṛṣṇaṅ eḷutiṅatu (‘Kopālakṛṣṇaṅ from Icalimaṭai copied’ or ‘the copying of Kopālakṛṣṇaṅ from Icalimaṭai’). The syntactic ambivalence of verbal nouns in Tamil as finite forms and verbal nouns will be discussed further in § 5.1.

(10) RE47681

... teyvanāyakaṅ kaiye|uttu

The handwriting of Teyvanāyakam.

3 Owners and ownership

The ownership of a manuscript can be expressed in two ways: (a) by the scribe of the manuscript who writes down the name of the person for whom the manuscript is intended (§ 3.1), or (b) by the owner himself, who writes somewhere in the manuscript his own name (§ 3.2).

3.1 Ownership stated by the scribe

Sometimes scribes record the name of the recipient of the manuscript, who is thus identified as its intended owner, i.e. the first person who possessed the artefact once it was completed. Although it cannot be said with certainty, we assume that the owner is also the sponsor, i.e. the person who paid for the work of the scribe.

The most common Sanskrit ways to indicate the owner are the genitive of the personal name followed by a word meaning ‘manuscript’ (11) or the genitive of the personal name followed by the title of the work in question (12).

(11) RE39684

... śrīmatgoḷakīmaṭhanivāsakāśyapānvayasya pañcākṣaraśivācāryyasya vaidyanāthasya pautrasya viśvanātheśvarasya putrasya vaidyanāthasya grandham iti jñeyam ...

It should be known that this is the manuscript of Vaidyanātha, son of Viśvanātheśvara, grandson of Vaidyanātha, [who was] of the lineage of Kāśyapa resident of the illustrious Goḷakī maṭha [and] teacher of the Pañcākṣaraśiva.

(12) RE43875β

nārāyaṇasya - vedaṃ tṛtiyāṣṭakam

The third Aṣṭakam of the Veda of Nārāyaṇa.

The same expressions are also used in Tamil, where the genitive is usually left unmarked (13).

(13) RE04080α

rāmasvāmi ayyan pustakam

The manuscript of Rāmasvāmi Ayyan.

The combination of a personal name followed by a compound made of the title of the work in question and a word meaning ‘manuscript’ is also not uncommon (14).

(14) RE10793β

cupparāyaṅ **punṅyāhavācanapostakaṃ**

The *Punṅyāhavācanam* manuscript of Cupparāyaṅ.

A further, slightly more articulated formula is made of the dative of the personal name of the recipient of the manuscript (i.e. the owner) followed by a copying formula (15, 16).

(15) RE15398

... tirunelveli mel maṭam tirupparaṅkuṅṅam ātiṅaṅ cuvāmikku muṭitta perumar piḷḷai makaṅ piccapilḷai eḷuṭi mukitta kūrmapiṅṅam yinām

The *Kūrmapiṅṅam* (read *Kūrmapurāṅam*), which was fully copied by Piccapilḷai son of Perumar Piḷḷai, who completed [it] for the master of the Maṭam Tirupparaṅkuṅṅam Ātiṅam in Tirunelveli, [was given as a] gift (*y-inām*).

(16) RE22704

veḷḷaṅkoḷḷi kuruṅātayyaṅ yeḷuṭinātu pālayaṅkoṭṭai piṅṅanda paṭṭaravarkaḷukku

Veḷḷaṅkoḷḷi (?) Kuruṅātayyaṅ copied [this manuscript] for Mr. Paṭṭar, who was born in Pālayaṅkoṭṭai.

3.2 Ownership stated by the owner

At other times, the owner himself writes what we could call an ownership statement. This means the hand that wrote such a statement differs from that of the scribe(s), who wrote the text(s) in the manuscript. Contrary to the previous case (§ 3.1), one cannot assume by default here that the owner was also the sponsor who paid for the production of the manuscript. Although this may at times be so, it may also be the case that the owner recorded his name on the manuscript after having bought it from a previous owner. In such cases, the statement is often left uninked.

3.2.1 Explicit ownership statement

A first case is represented by the string [*personal name*] + [*title*] (and/or [*manuscript*]), which we interpret as an ownership statement, because as mentioned above, Tamil syntax does not generally use the genitive case to mark ownership

when the owner is a person. A further – probably rather obvious – feature of this kind of statement is that it is not part of the scribal colophon, but can be added, for example, on a leaf at the beginning (17) or on an inserted folio (18).

(17) RE49434α

nārāyaṇasāmi[v(?)]**āddhyār** e[ā]m/ kāṇṭam patapustakam

The manuscript with the *pada* text of the seventh chapter of Nārāyaṇasāmi vāddhyār.

(18) RE49434γ

veṃkaṭeśvaran e[lu] **kāṇḍam padapustakam**

The manuscript of the *pada* text of the seventh chapter of Veṃkaṭeśvaran.

Proof of the fact that our syntactic interpretation is correct arises from the following colophon (19), where the ownership is stated by the string [*personal name*] + [*title*] and is followed by the further string [*personal name*] + [*scribal statement*], clear evidence that the first name occurring cannot be that of the scribe.

(19) RE19979γ

tirumeṇiṇātapattar **rudratrīśatai** (*line change*) aḷakiyasundaram **svahastalikhitam**

The *Rudratrīśatai* of Tirumeṇiṇātapattar. Aḷakiyasundaram copied with his own hand.

Another example (20) reads the same information in the opposite order with the string [*personal name*] + [*scribal statement*] followed by the string [*personal name*] + [*manuscript*].

(20) RE10717β

radrakṣināmasmamasaram **śittiraimāsam** \᳚ 6 ᳚/ **śuklapakṣam pañccha**[[ā]]**mi somavāram** ye[uti] mukuñcutu **meyiyū** cuppurāya[[ṇ→]]**svahastilikhitam** | yīsvarakuru(kal) **postakam**

In the year called Radrakṣi, month of Śittirai, sixth day, bright fortnight, fifth [lunar day], Monday, it was fully copied. Cuppurāyaṇ from Meyiyū copied with his own hand. The manuscript of Yīsvarakurukaḷ.

3.2.2 Stray names written by a ‘different’ hand

Another way in which a secondary owner can record his ownership of the manuscript is simply by adding his own name somewhere on the manuscript (21, 22), or even on a slip of paper glued onto the manuscript (23). As a consequence, such a stray name will then be palaeographically distinct from the hand(s) of the scribe(s).

(21) RE33907α

nārayaṇan (the name is actually written on the blank verso of the folio on whose recto a section of text ends)

(22) RE43875α

jānakirāma śarmā (different hand on the guard leaf that is in fact an inserted folio that clearly does not belong to the original bundle)

(23) RE12615

sēṅāpatikaṅ pāṭikaḷ (written on slips of paper pasted on the leaves)

A caveat is in place here, as one cannot completely exclude that the owner may have recorded the name of the scribe on the manuscript. However, one wonders to what extent this may be likely, particularly if no further specification is given, such as adding a few words to the tune of ‘this was copied by ...’. A case in point is manuscript RE43820, where this is exactly what happens (24).

(24) RE43820

yajñasubrahmaṇyasya likhitam (*line change*) **jānakirāma śarmā** ||

The writing of Yajñasubrahmaṇya. Jānakirāma Śarmā.

Here the hand of the colophon seems to differ from the one that copied the text. We can thus assume that Jānakirāma Śarmā was the owner, who wrote down his name on the cover of the bundle, as well as indicating the name of the scribe.

4 Scribes as well as owners

It may also be the case that a person made a copy for himself, meaning he would be both scribe and owner of the manuscript. It seems that there is no standard way to express such a situation and what follows is a collection of cases encountered thus far, both in Sanskrit and Tamil (25 to 30).

(25) RE12621β

vemkaṭakṛṣṇalikhitam svārtthe[This] was copied by Vemkaṭakṛṣṇa for himself (*svārtthe*).

(26) RE08256δ

yenakku yeḷutik koṇṭeṅ

I copied [this manuscript] for myself.

(27) RE53247α

śrī-aṅṅāṅṅoḷapurānīvāsīno veṅkaṭarāyaguro svahastalikhitaṃ | pustakaṃ tasyaiva

The writing by his own hand of Veṅkaṭarāyaguru inhabitant of the town of śrī-aṅṅāṅṅoḷa (?). The manuscript is indeed his.

(28) RE55827γ

svāmimalairāmu svahastalikhitaṃ | ॐ svāmimalairāmu postakaṃ |

Svāmimalairāmu copied with his own hand. The manuscript of Svāmimalairāmu.

(29) RE19028β

[date] yeḷuti muhiñcitu | ॐ subraṃhmaṇyan pustakaṃ | svahastalikhitaṃ |

[date] it was fully copied. The manuscript of Subraṃhmaṇyan, copied with his own hand.

(30) RE55825

... **ṭṭīyakāṇḍaṃ** yeḷiti mukañcutu | ॐ marutvakuṭi **sundaravāṭiyār svahastalikhitaṃ |**
 ॐ **yeḷuttavan kuḍuppadu | kuḍāviṭṭāl** dayavu **paṅṅi sundavāddhyār vaṃśa-**
sthālyeḍa(ttil) kuḍuppatu |

... the third chapter was fully copied. Sundaravāṭiyār of Marutvakuṭi copied with his own hand. He who takes it, will return it. If one does not return it, he will be kind and return it to the members (?) of the family of Sundavāddhyār.¹³

At other junctures, the fact that a scribe is also the owner of the manuscript in question can be ascertained when other paratexts within the same manuscript help make the fact clear (31). Each paratext gives only the information that the person is the scribe or the owner. Combined, these tell us that the person played both roles.

(31) RE20052

RE20052α - *Cintyāgama: Jīṃoddhāravidhi***svāmināthapaṭṭar pustakaṃ | ॐ ||**

The manuscript of Svāmināthapaṭṭar.

RE20052β - *Sūkṣmaśāstra: Adhvanyāsavidhi and Śaḍadhvalakṣaṇa***ayyāpaṭṭar kumāran svāmināthabhaṭṭar postakaṃ | ॐ**

The manuscript of Svāmināthabhaṭṭar son of Ayyāpaṭṭar.

¹³ In *vaṃśasthālyeḍa*(ttil) the combination of suffixes *-āḷ-yeḍattu-il* is the Brahmin Tamil version of standard Tamil *-kaḷ-iṭattu-il*. The compound *vaṃśa-stha-* is tentatively understood to mean ‘family member’ (given in the Brahmin Tamil plural *vaṃśasthāḷ*).

RE20052γ - *Navarātriniṇṇayavidhi*
svāmināthapaṭṭar | navarātripūjā | ௨

The *Navarātripūjā* of Svāmināthapaṭṭar.

RE20052δ - *Āśaucādividhi*
svāmināthabhaṭṭar svahastalakhitam | | ௨ ||

Svāmināthabhaṭṭar copied (*lakhitam*, emend into *likhitam*) with his own hand.

A sub-case of this typology occurs when one of the paratexts is just a stray name (32). The person behind that name being both the scribe and the owner of the manuscript is of course made clear by information contained in the other paratexts (colophons and ownership statements), in so far as the hand that wrote them all is identical.

(32) RE15536

RE15536α - *Vināyakalpa*
lokanādhana

RE15536β - ?
bṛhaśreṇipuranivāsaśrīdakṣiṇāmūrttigurusūnulokanāthan svahastalikhitam sampūrṇam

Lokanāthan son of the teacher Śrīdakṣiṇāmūrṭti inhabitant of Bṛhaśreṇipura copied with his own hand. It is completed.

RE15536γ - *Sarasvatīpūjākalpa*
śrīmatlokanāthan pustakam sampūrṇam

The manuscript of the illustrious Lokanāthan is completed.

RE15536δ - *Gaurīpūjā*
śrīmatlokanāadhan gaurīpūjai samaptaḥ

The illustrious Lokanāadhan. The *Gaurīpūjai* is completed.

RE15536ε - *Anantavratapūjā*
 periñceri **lok[[ā]]nāadhan grandham**

The manuscript of Lokanāadhan of Periñceri.

5 Scribes or owners?

As mentioned in the introduction we have encountered two main kinds of occurrences of personal names the interpretation of which is ambiguous. The observa-

tions made so far will help us direct our understanding of them, though they may not always lead us to a satisfactory clarification.

5.1 A syntactic conundrum

Another very frequent way of concluding a Tamil colophon is constructed with the gerund (*ceytu vinaiyeccam*) of the root *eḷutu-*, namely *eḷuti*, followed by a finite form of the verbal roots *muki-* or *muṭi-* (both meaning ‘to finish, to complete’). Hence, the standard expression would be *eḷuti mukintatu* or *eḷuti muṭintatu*, although variant spellings are quite numerous.¹⁴ What matters here the most is that this expression seems to be in large part reserved for the syntactic string [*date*] + [*copying statement*], which would translate as ‘in date so and so, [this manuscript] was fully copied’ or, rather, ‘in date so and so, the completion of writing [occurred]’, since the third person singular neuter of a verb is basically a verbal noun.¹⁵

There are however syntactically more complex cases in which the same construction has in the middle two more modules, namely [*personal name*] and [*title*] (or [*manuscript*]); for example in RE10775 (33.i).

(33.i) RE10775

krodhināmasaṃvatsaraṃ kārtt[ika]māsaṃ = 22⟨D1⟩ **śuppu sahasranāma** yeḷuti mukiñcatu

If we apply the principle that seems to have emerged from our previous examples according to which the construction [*personal name*] + [*title*] (or [*manuscript*]) indicates ownership, then we would need to translate as follows:

In the year called Krodhi, month of Kārttika, 22nd day, the *Sahasranāmam* of Śuppu was fully copied.

One can easily gather more similar cases (34.i, 35.i).

¹⁴ The spelling of both *eḷuti mukintatu* or *eḷuti muṭintatu* is rather unstable. Just to give a few examples, the former can be also spelled as *eḷuti mukintitu* (RE04209α), *eḷuti mukiñcutu* (RE05915), *yeḷiti mukhiñcutu* (RE10689), *yeḷuti mukuñcutu* (RE10717β), *yeḷuti mukiñcatu* (RE10775) and **yeṣuti muhintatu** (RE10906α, written in Tamilian Grantha script!), the latter as *yeḷuti muṭiñcatu* (RE04090β) and *eḷuti muṭittatu* (RE10882α).

¹⁵ Note that the third person singular neuter can be used for animate agents, too. See the example (16), which has already been discussed above in § 3.1.

(34.i) RE325728

ceya (YJ1c) āṭi m^o 32 (D2) aruvatterai comecuvarakurukkaḷ āruṇam upaṇiṣat eḷuti muhuṇ[catu]

In the Jovian year Ceya, month of Āṭi, 32nd day, the *Āruṇam Upaṇiṣat* of Aruvatterai Comecuvarakuru was fully copied.

(35.i) RE47712ε - *Koṅkaṇar Kaṭaikkāṇṭam* - 25 Dec. 1822

ayyar kaṭaikkāṇ[ṭam ye]ḷuti mukintitu ௭ 998 (YK1a) mārkāḷi (M2) 12 (D1) yeḷuti mukintatu

The *Kaṭaikkāṇṭam* of Ayyar was fully copied. Kollam year 998, month of Mārkaḷi, 12th day – it was fully copied.

However, one could understand the syntax of these sentences in a completely different way with the module [*personal name*] indicating the name of the scribe, rather than that of the owner. In other words, [*personal name*] would be the agent of the action expressed in the module [*copying statement*] and one should not interpret it as an unmarked genitive, which would instead put it in a relationship with the module [*title*] (or [*manuscript*]). Such an interpretation is possible given the syntactic scope of the Tamil third person singular neuter of finite verbal forms, which as mentioned earlier, can be a verbal noun, as understood in the string [*date*] + [*copying formula* (eḷuti muki-)] or a finite verbal form, as we are alternatively arguing here for the string [*personal name*] + ... + [*copying formula* (eḷuti muki-)]. Hence, one could provide for all the examples just seen above (33.i, 34.i and 35.i) an alternative translation (33.ii, 34.ii and 35.ii) in which the module [*personal name*] indicates the agent of the module [*copying formula* (eḷuti muki-)].

(33.ii) RE10775

In the year called Krodhi, month of Kārttika, 22nd day, Śuppu fully copied the *Sahasranāmam*.

(34.ii) RE325728

In the Jovian year Ceya, month of Āṭi, 32nd day, Aruvatterai Comecuvarakuru fully copied the *Āruṇam Upaṇiṣat*.

(35.ii) RE47712ε

Ayyar fully copied the *Kaṭaikkāṇṭam*. Kollam year 998, month of Mārkaḷi, 12th day – it was fully copied.¹⁶

16 The same double interpretation was offered above in § 2 for the string [*personal name*] + [*copying formula* (*likhitam* / *svahastalikhitam*)]. For similar observations on Tamil syntax, see Chevillard 2021, 22.

This latter interpretation seems to be supported by at least one notable case in the corpus here under consideration. In manuscript RE43643δ after the string [*personal name*] + [*title*] + [*copying formula (eḷuti muṭintatu)*], we find another string that reveals the recipient of the manuscript (36).

(36) RE43643δ - *Āśaucadīpikā* with Tamil meaning - 26 Feb. 1837

dhunmukhivaruṣam mācimāca m° 17 teti nāyittikkiḷamai **saṣṭi viśākanekṣittirattil** paḷaṇiyil tūrunācci ammaṇ caṇṇitāṇattil **daṇḍāyutapāṇisamipattil** comaraḥampeṭṭaiyil irukkum cāmiṇāta ayyaṇ kumāraṇ **bālasvāmi** ayyaṇ ācaucaviti eḷuti muṭintatu muṛrum civacitamparattukku eḷutiṇa eṭu

In the year Dhunmukhi, month of Māci, 17th day, Sunday, sixth [lunar day], constellation of Viśāka, Bālasvāmi Ayyaṇ son of Cāmiṇāta Ayyaṇ who is in Comaraḥampeṭṭai in the presence of (**samipattil*) Daṇḍāyutapāṇi in the divine presence of (*caṇṇitāṇattil*) Tūrunācci Ammaṇ at Paḷaṇi fully copied the *Ācaucaviti*. The manuscript was copied for Civacitamparam.

Here we are explicitly told that the name of the scribe, namely Bālasvāmi Ayyaṇ, and that of the recipient/owner, namely Civacitamparam, are different. Therefore, the syntactic string [*date*] + [*personal name*] + [*title*] + [*copying formula (eḷuti muṭintatu)*] clearly does not express ownership.

Unfortunately, for the time being we are not able to detect a rule – if one exists at all – that allows us to decide how to interpret the string [*personal name*] + [*title*] (or [*manuscript*]) when the available information is not as straightforward as in the case of RE43643δ (36). Increasingly extensive scrutiny of the paratextual material and the integration of further palaeographical and codicological data will hopefully help us solve in future some of these unclear cases.

5.2 Stray names written by the ‘same’ hand

We now return to the issue of stray names. We have already seen above (§ 3.2.2) that if the hand that wrote the stray name is different to the one that wrote the (main) text(s) of the manuscript, it can be assumed the floating name refers to the owner. We have also noticed (§ 4) that sometimes, by cross-checking various paratexts within the same manuscript, a stray name written by the same hand that wrote the text(s) can be attributed to a scribe who was also the owner of the manuscript in question. However, there are more ambiguous cases, where it is difficult to decide on the role of the person behind the stray name.

Sometimes, we meet stray names that on palaeographical and codicological bases can be assumed to refer to the scribe and not the owner of the manuscript, though the latter option cannot be completely excluded. For example, both (37) RE10829α and (38) RE10845 read *satyajñāni* at the very end of the text (Figs 1 and

2). This seems to be a personal name and, since it is written by the same hand that copied the text in the manuscript, it also seems plausible that it is the signature of the scribe rather than the name of the owner/sponsor.

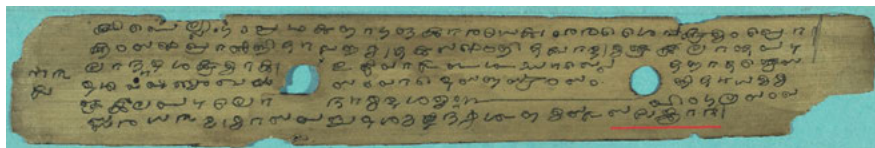


Fig. 1: RE10829α [134'6]

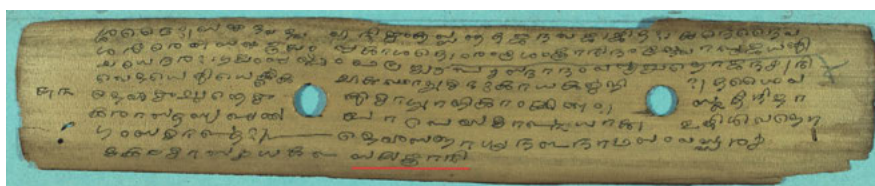


Fig. 2: RE10845 [63'8]

Similarly, in the case of (39) RE33907β the personal name **tirumalanampi** that appears at the end of the manuscript is written by the same hand that copied the text of the manuscript (Fig. 3), hence it seems to refer to the scribe rather than the owner/sponsor.

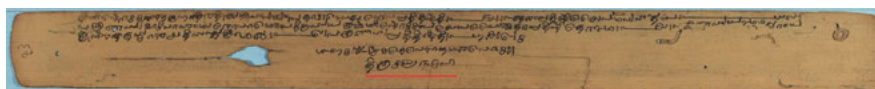


Fig. 3: RE33907β [104'5]

However, even if one considers these observations convincing, the question remains as to why these people did not add a [copying statement] such as *svahastalikhitam*, given that there was enough available space on the leaf to do so?

To the contrary, however, at other times the absence of the module [copying statement] can be justified, as for example in the case of (40) RE11032. Here, RE11032β (Fig. 4) contains just a stray name, whereas RE11032α, RE11032γ and RE11032δ tell us that the same person was the scribe of the manuscript. It is then possible to assume that RE11032β simply indicates the person in question was just

the scribe and not the original owner of the manuscript. However, does this provide enough evidence to make such a claim? Both palaeographical and codicological considerations can help corroborate our assumption here. On the one hand, the hand that wrote the stray name in RE11032β is the same that copied the text of the manuscript, on the other, the name is seen to be written at the very end of the last line of the folio. This seems to suggest that there was not enough space to add the word *svahastalikhitam*, which was however already used before in the manuscript where space was available (i.e. RE11032α, Fig. 5).

(40) RE11032

RE11032α

neṭuṅkāṭu **vasantarājagurukkaḷ prathamaputran sundareśvaran svahastalikhitam**

Sundareśvaran first son of Vasantarājaguru of Neṭuṅkāṭu copied with his own hand.

RE11032β

sundareśvaran

Sundareśvaran.

RE11032γ

neṭuṅkāṭu vasantarājagurukkaḷ prathamaputran sundareśvaran svahastalikhitam

Sundareśvaran first son of Vasantarājaguru of Neṭuṅkāṭu copied with his own hand.

RE11032δ

sundaram svahastalikhitam

Sundareśvaran copied with his own hand.



Fig. 4: RE11032β [237'8]

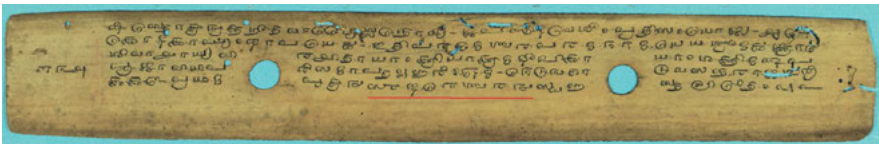


Fig. 5: RE11032α [138'4]

The same observation seems not to reflect a mere coincidence, as it also works in another case, namely that of manuscript (41) RE43394. Here too, RE43394α (Fig. 6) contains just a stray name written at the end of the last line of the page, with no space for further additions such as a [copying statement], contrary to the statements in RE43394β (Fig. 7) and RE43394γ.

(41) RE43394

RE43394α

koṣappaṭṭu candraśekharagurukkaḷ

RE43394β

koṣappaṭṭu bādūrusubbarāyagurukkaḷ kumāran candraśekharagurukkaḷ svahastalikhitam

Candraśekharaguru son of Bādūrusubbarāyaguru of Koṣappaṭṭu copied with his own hand.

RE43394γ

koṣappaṭṭu subbarāyagurukkaḷ kumāran candraśekharagurukkaḷ svahastalikhitam
 ௨ yiva (YJ1a) **perattāṣi** m° 27 (D1) **somavāram rātripaṇca**[190v4]**maṇikki**
reṇukāmaṇḍapapūjai yeḷudī **accudu**

Candraśekharaguru son of Subbarāyaguru of Koṣappaṭṭu copied with his own hand. Jovian year of Yiva [= Yuva?], month of Perattāṣi, 27th day, Monday, at the fifth hour of the night, the *Reṇukāmaṇḍapapūjai* was copied.

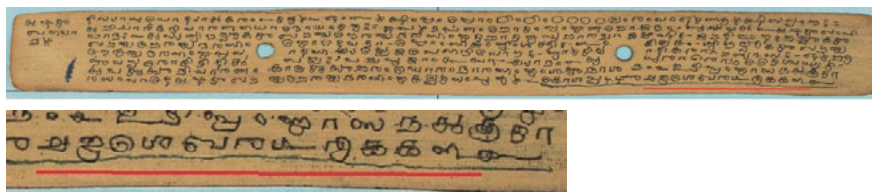


Fig. 6: RE43394α [161°8] and detail

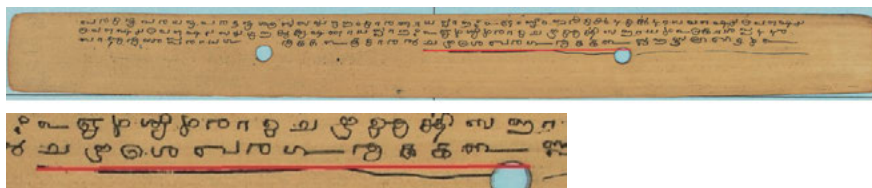


Fig. 7: RE43394β [163°2] and detail

6 Conclusion

All the cases discussed so far do not exhaust the virtually endless intricacies that can emerge when interpreting colophons. What we have intended to show here are the clear cases and those that can at least be analysed and categorised, though at times they may remain ambiguous. A minimal list of further complications would include: physical damages that impair the reading; uncertainties in understanding (in particular from digital reproductions of manuscripts) if certain characters are inked and thus reconstructing the sequence in which they have been inscribed on the leaf; and the fragmentary information from different manuscripts about the same person, whose role – or roles – remains unclear.

Aside from the cases where the information is given overtly, one must recur to philological, palaeographical and codicological means to make sense of the content of the colophons. Please note that our intent should not be concerned with only baffling cases, but also provide an explicit justification for our interpretation of the role of personal names in colophons based on actual evidence and not just intuitive appreciation of these short texts.

It remains that the above-mentioned means are not always sufficient to solve the problems we may encounter and would benefit from the establishment of a far wealthier database. In this way we would be able to assess the history of each manuscript far better, which for the time being awaits reconnection to its individual past, severed as it is by a long history of inadequate archiving practices and limited cataloguing undertakings.¹⁷

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¹⁷ We would like to mention the praiseworthy quality of the hitherto published catalogues of the IFP collection. They are produced to a commendable high standard, a quality that demands time and resources to be achieved and which is probably the reason why they cover a minimal part of the collection. See Varadachari 1986, 1987, 1990, and Grimal and Ganesan 2002.

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