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Some Aspects of Textual Criticism Concerning the Keralite Drama Manuscripts

INTRODUCTION

The Keralite drama manuscripts are well known through Taruvai Gaṇapati Śāstrī's¹ editions, which were published from 1911 onward in the *Trivandrum Sanskrit Series* (TSS). Among the texts edited by Gaṇapati Śāstrī are the thirteen "Trivandrum plays" attributed to Bhāsa, Mahendravikramavarman's Mattavilāsa, the two dramas of Kulaśekhavarman, Tapatīsaṃvaraṇa and Subhadrādhanañjaya, and Harṣadeva's Nāgānanda.² Although these editions present a number of variant readings in notes, Gaṇapati Śāstrī's editorial work turns out to be unsatisfactory in more than one respect when one compares the editions with the manuscripts from which they were prepared. In this paper, I would like to focus on three major points: First, the orthographical conventions of the scribes, second, the edition of the Prakrit passages, and third, the problem of contamination. These problems are by no means restricted to the Keralite drama manuscripts; nevertheless, since they provide good examples for the above mentioned points, they can be used as the starting point for a more general discussion of editorial practice.

1. THE MANUSCRIPT TRADITION AND ITS ORTHOGRAPHICAL CONVENTIONS

Most of the dramas contained in Keralite manuscripts are transmitted exclusively in this tradition. Besides the thirteen "Trivandrum plays", the *prahasana* Mattavilāsa and the two dramas Tapatīsaṃvaraṇa and Subhadrādhanañjaya, the dramas most frequently represented in Ker-

¹ Taruvai Gaṇapati Śāstrī was born at Taruvai in Tinnevely District in 1860 A.D. (Raja 1980: 257). Later he "sanskritized" his name to "Taruvāgrahāram Gaṇapati Śāstrī". I would like to thank Heike Moser for this reference.

² The dramas were published in the following order: 1911 Tapatīsaṃvaraṇa (TSS 11); 1912 Subhadrādhanañjaya (TSS 13), Svapnavāsavadatta (TSS 15), Pratijñāyugandharāyaṇa (TSS 16), Pañcarātra (TSS 17), Avimāraka (TSS 20), Bālacarita (TSS 21), and Madhyamavyāyoga, Dūtavākya, Dūtaghaṭotkaca, Karṇabhāra and Ūrubhaṅga (TSS 22); 1913 Abhiṣekanāṭaka (TSS 26); 1914 Cārudatta (TSS 39); 1915 Pratimānāṭaka (TSS 42); 1917 Mattavilāsa (TSS 55) and Nāgānanda (TSS 59).

alite manuscripts are the *prahasana* Bhagavadajjukīya by Bodhāyana,³ the one-act play Kalyāṇasaugandhika by Nīlakaṇṭha⁴ and Śaktibhadra's Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi,⁵ which is often combined with the other two dramas centering on Rāma, the Pratimānāṭaka and the Abhiṣekanāṭaka. Only some of the dramas found in Keralite manuscripts, e.g., Harṣadeva's Nāgānanda and Kālidāsa's Śākuntala, can also be located in other manuscript traditions. Most of the dramas, or individual acts of them, are to this day performed in Kūṭiyāṭṭam, the living Sanskrit theatre of Kerala.⁶ This affiliation to the tradition of Kūṭiyāṭṭam perhaps explains the uniformity of the Keralite drama manuscripts.⁷ They are written on palm leaf,⁸ usually in Malayāḷam script, but occasionally also in Grantha.⁹

³ First edition 1924 by Banerji Śāstrī. Lockwood and Bhat's (1995: II/4-8) attribution of this drama to Mahendravikramavarman is rather dubious; see Steiner 1997: 255-261.

⁴ First edition 1925 by Barnett.

⁵ First edition 1926 by Kuppuswami Sastri.

⁶ For the repertoire of this theatre tradition, see Moser 2008: 245-275 (cf. also the very detailed description of the 41-day performance cycle of the Mantrāṅkam, the third act of the Pratijñāyugandharāyaṇa, in Moser 2000).

⁷ The only exception to this uniformity is the spelling of the Prakrit passages, where we find two different systems (see below).

⁸ For details concerning the species of palm tree, the preparation and conservation of the leaves, etc., see Murthy 1996: 27-31 and Vijayan 1996. The scribes incised the letters into the dried palm leaf with a stylus. A black paste was then smeared over the leaf and subsequently wiped off. The paste settled into the grooves and thus made the letters visible (see also Murthy 1996: 52-54). When the dye had faded away, this procedure was repeated. The leaves of a manuscript were normally foliated with numbers appearing in the left margin of each recto side, usually mid-way down (for details about the two systems of numeration, etc., see Esposito 2010b). For binding, two round holes were punched in the middle of each half of a leaf. A wooden board of approximately the same size as the leaves and with similar holes was placed on either side of a set of leaves. A cotton cord was drawn through the string holes and the bundle bound together with it (see also Murthy 1996: 28). In this way single dramas or sets of dramas are kept together as a batch. Since single leaves can easily be removed, sometimes whole dramas are missing from a set. At times, texts written by different scribes and concerning unrelated topics are also bound together, as in the case of ms. Lahore 6243. This manuscript not only contains the Abhiṣekanāṭaka and the Pratimānāṭaka written in Malayāḷam script, but also an Aśvalāyanasmṛti written in Grantha script. There are also some recent paper copies of palm-leaf manuscripts (mostly in Devanāgarī script), e.g., mss. R 3810 (written in 1921/1922), R 5148 (written in 1925/1926) and SD 1024 (written in 1906) of the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras, or ms. T 48 of the Oriental Research Institute and Manuscripts Library, Trivandrum.

⁹ The only South Indian drama manuscript written in Grantha of which I am aware is ms. 1488 of the Calicut University collection. It contains the Abhiṣekanāṭaka, the Bālacarita and the Avimāraka. While the Bālacarita is complete, only a single folio of the Abhiṣekanāṭaka is preserved, which contains the prose passage after verse 34 of the

Therefore, when examining the manuscripts, we have to take into account similarities between the *akṣaras* of the Malayāḷam and Grantha alphabets respectively.¹⁰ The oldest manuscripts are about 500 years old; the most recent ones were written in the beginning of the twentieth century.¹¹ Metrical passages are usually transmitted quite uniformly in the manuscripts, while numerous and significant variations can be found in the prose and the stage directions.¹²

Quite important for a correct evaluation of variant readings, especially in the Prakrit passages, are the peculiar orthographical conventions of the scribes of the Keralite manuscripts. Since most editors do not mention these conventions, many researchers are uncertain about their specifics. This fact has sometimes led to futile speculations or even mistakes. With regard to the Keralite drama manuscripts, it is crucial to know that there are two spelling systems for the Prakrit passages. In the first system, medial and final nasals are written exactly as in Sanskrit passages.¹³ In the second system, the representation of a medial and final





seventh act up to the end; of the Avimārika the last folios with the text after verse 10 of the fourth act are missing.




¹⁰ I will refer in the following only to manuscripts written in Malayāḷam script. Here confusion is especially likely between *ca* (𑌕), *pa* (𑌖), *va* (𑌗) and *kha* (𑌘), between *ga* (𑌙) and *śa* (𑌚), between *da* (𑌛) and *bha* (𑌜), and between *o* and *au* in combination with a consonant (*ko* = 𑌛𑌃, *kau* = 𑌛𑌄), furthermore between *i* (𑌞), *u* (𑌟) and *ḷa* (𑌠) as well as between the symbol for *ā* in combination with a consonant (𑌡) and the *visarga* (𑌢). In older manuscripts, there is still a great resemblance between *ka* (𑌛) and *ta* (𑌣). In some hastily written manuscripts the *visarga* can easily be confused with a *daṇḍa*.



¹¹ Unfortunately only a few of the drama manuscripts written in Malayāḷam script are dated. In all of them the year is given in *kollam*. The so-called “Koḷambam (or Quilon) Era” began in September, A.D. 824 (cf. Burnell 1874: 55). In the case of the “Trivandrum plays”, the scribes mention the year during which they copied the respective text only in the following manuscripts: TR 10720 (825 *kollam* / A.D. 1650), TR 20469 (841 *kollam* / A.D. 1666), TR 557 (998 *kollam* / A.D. 1823), and TR 12356 (1071 *kollam* / A.D. 1896).




¹² This does not necessarily point to different performance traditions; it rather allows the conclusion that the stage directions were added to the manuscripts in the course of time. In the Kūṭiyāṭṭam tradition, directions for performing the plays were noted down in special handbooks for the performers, called Kramadīpikā and Āṭṭaparakāram. In the Kramadīpikā, stage directions, costumes, the way of entering the stage, etc., are prescribed; the Āṭṭaparakāram contains comments meant for the actors, like interpretations of the scene, descriptions of the feelings that should be shown, etc.

¹³ In Sanskrit passages, a nasal is combined with a palatal, retroflex, dental or *r* in a ligature. In combination with a velar, however, a nasal is usually represented by the *anusvāra* (𑌤) in order to avoid difficult ligatures, the only exception being sometimes *ṅg*. For the same reason, either the *anusvāra* or a special sign for *m* with *virāma* (𑌦) appears before labials. Additionally, *m* with *virāma* can sometimes be found before *v*. The same rules apply to final *anusvāra*.



nasal as a class nasal is very rare; usually it is written as a small circle above the preceding consonant or vowel.¹⁴ The two systems also differ in the representation of geminate consonants. In the first system, geminate consonants are written as in Sanskrit with ligatures (*tta* = , *ddha* = ). In the second system, however, the doubling of consonants is indicated by a small circle preceding the consonant to be doubled (*tta* = , *ddha* = ); ligatures are rarely employed in the Prakrit passages.¹⁵ Printz was aware of the fact that in some Dravidian writing systems the doubling of consonants is indicated by a symbol similar to the *anusvāra*; he did not know, however, that in this system the writing of the *anusvāra* (or nasals in general) differs clearly from this *anusvāra*-like symbol indicating gemination. He therefore wondered whether forms like *dassanā* and *damśanā* (Skr. *darśanīya*), both attested in the “Trivandrum-plays”, could simply be orthographical variants (1921: 9f.).¹⁶

Peculiar to the second spelling system is the writing of *yy*; for example, *ayya* (Skr. *ārya*) is written *a*-circle-*a* ().¹⁷ In the first system, *yy* is always written with a ligature as a double *ya* () (*ayya* = ).¹⁸ In this case Printz (1921: 21) speculated about the treatment of *yya*, referring to Pischel (§ 284) who suggested that the small circle in *aśa* either presents a choice between the pronunciations *jj* and *yy*, or expresses a sound in between these phonetic groups.¹⁹ Since the manuscripts in which geminate consonants are written with ligatures in the Prakrit passages without exception read *ayya* where the other manuscripts have *aśa*, there can be no doubt about the pronunciation of the small circle.

¹⁴ E.g., *kiṃ dāni* is written in the first spelling system  (properly: *kin dāni*), in the second system .

¹⁵ In this system, , for *e* in combination with consonants (in the Malayālam script this sign precedes the affiliated character), is inserted between the circle indicating the doubling of the consonant and the consonant itself: for example, *cche*, which appears in Sanskrit passages as well as in manuscripts written according to the first system as , is written as .

¹⁶ Even Burnell was apparently not aware of the two spelling systems; cf. Burnell 1874: 34-36.

¹⁷ See also *ayyena*, written *a*-circle-*ena* (), and *ayyo*, written *a*-circle-*o* (.

¹⁸ See also *ayyena* = , *ayyo* = .

¹⁹ Also Achan (1925: xxiii-xxv) speculated in his edition of the Bhagavadajjukīya about the treatment of *ayya*, *ayyena* and *ayyo*, as he obviously knew only one of the two Prakrit spelling systems. He drew conclusions similar to those of Pischel (Achan 1925: xxivf.).

Further, manuscripts following the first system consistently use *ēva* in the Prakrit passages,²⁰ while those following the second system exhibit *ēvva* throughout. However, in the printed editions both forms, *ēvva* and *ēva*, appear throughout without any identifiable system. Based on Gaṇapati Śāstrī's editions, Printz (1921: 10) declared *ēvva* as the predominant form in the Prakrit of the "Trivandrum plays".

These are only three of many examples where editorial inaccuracy and the absence of any description of orthographical conventions in the manuscripts have led to wrong conclusions. It is therefore crucial to describe orthographic conventions accurately in the introduction to a critical edition. Furthermore, for the evaluation of variant readings, the reader not acquainted with the original script needs to be informed about letters that can be easily confused as well as about frequent scribal errors.²¹ Although the above may seem obvious, it is actually a rare practice.

2. THE PRAKRIT PASSAGES

In editing a drama, the most difficult decisions often concern the Prakrit passages. Prakrit is far less standardized than Sanskrit. As a consequence, different grammatical forms or different spellings of the same word often appear side by side in the manuscripts. How should these inconsistencies be handled? Two diametrically opposed positions in dealing with this problem have emerged:²² Some scholars, including Pischel (p. 46, § 42) and Hillebrandt (1912: iif.), have pled for adjusting the Prakrit in the manuscripts to the rules taught by the Prakrit grammarians.²³ This approach has had many opponents: Richard Salomon (1982: 124f.), for example, states that since Pischel's time new forms of early dramatic Prakrit have been discovered which show that the grammarians' knowledge of the dialects was incomplete and that their rules are therefore unauthoritative.²⁴ Salomon mentions the Prakrit of Aśvaghōṣa's plays, edited in 1911 by Lüders, eleven years after the publi-

²⁰ Similarly, they have *yyēva* after the short vowels *ē* and *ō*, but never after a vocative.

²¹ For frequent writing mistakes in manuscripts written in Malayāḷam script, see Esposito 2004: 281f. and 2010b.

²² For a more detailed exposition, see Steiner 2001.

²³ Both Hillebrandt and Cappeller, for example, thus harmonized the forms in the Prakrit passages in their editions of the *Mudrārākṣasa* and *Śākuntala*, respectively, as they explicitly state in their introductions (Hillebrandt 1912: iif.; Cappeller 1909: xvii).

²⁴ Gawroński (1911: 282) also prefers the inconsistencies and unusual forms found in the manuscripts to the prescriptions of the grammarians.

cation of Pischel's grammar. Similarly, the Prakrit in the "Trivandrum plays" also deviates in many respects from the Prakrit of the grammarians.²⁵ For instance, there is no regular treatment of intervocalic consonants. Sometimes they are preserved, and sometimes they are dropped irrespective of the word, the manuscript or the play. Thus we find many cases of "correct" and "incorrect" forms side by side, like *jaī* and *jadi* for Sanskrit *yadi*, or *laheam* and *labheam* for Sanskrit *labheya*. And even worse, the Prakrit of the "Trivandrum plays" contains some forms that are not only contrary to the rules of the grammarians, but also contrary to the Prakrit of other dramas. For example, Sanskrit *yya* and *rya* are normally represented by *jja* in Śaurasenī. In the "Trivandrum plays", however, instead of *jja*, *yya* is found in all manuscripts, as, for example, in *ayya* (Skr. *ārya*) or *kayya* (Skr. *kārya*). In dealing with Sanskrit *jña* in Prakrit words, the manuscripts of the "Trivandrum plays" alternate between *ṇṇa* and *ñña*. The same alternation occurs in the case of original Sanskrit *nya* and *ṇya*, as, for example, in *aṇṇa* or *añña* for Sanskrit *anya*. This usage of *ñña* is, as far as I know, not found in the Prakrit of any drama apart from those by Aśvaghōṣa and the dramas of the Keralite tradition. Instead of *-mētta*, only *-matta* is found for Sanskrit *-mātra* in the "Trivandrum plays". The infinitive of *kr*, *kattum*, and the participium necessitatis *kattavva* appear more frequently in these manuscripts than the *kādum* and *kādavva* of later plays. It would be quite absurd to "correct" these forms according to the grammarians' rules since they are found in all manuscripts of the "Trivandrum plays" and even of other plays of the Keralite tradition.

In two of the thirteen "Trivandrum plays", Pañcarātra and Bālacarita, we come across a hitherto unknown Prakrit dialect, the dialect of the herdsmen.²⁶ As in Śaurasenī, the nominative singular of the masculine stems in *-a* ends in *-o*. The change of *ra* to *la*, however, is reminiscent of Māgadhī, as is the distinctive irregular treatment of Sanskrit *ṣtha*, *kṣa* and *ṣka* in some of the manuscripts. A unique feature is the representation of all sibilants by the retroflex sibilant.²⁷ Neither in the Nāṭyaśāstra nor in the grammars do we find the description of a dialect that corresponds to this language of the herdsmen. The dialect contains simi-

²⁵ For the Prakrit of the "Trivandrum plays", see Esposito 2004: 31-83.

²⁶ For a more detailed description of this dialect, see Esposito 2004: 35-37.

²⁷ The only other instance of a dramatic Prakrit employing the retroflex sibilant is the Dhakkī, found in the Mṛcchakaṭīka, where Skr. *ṣ* becomes *ṣ*, but Skr. *s* and *ś* are represented by *s*; see Pischel § 228 as well as Bloch 1965: 73. Furthermore, the retroflex sibilant appears in some (northwestern?) inscriptions; see von Hinüber 2001: 177f. (§ 220).

larities to Śaurasenī as well as to Māgadhī; should we therefore “correct” it to fit Māgadhī or Śaurasenī? Or would it be better to describe this dialect as we find it in the manuscripts, even though it is not attested by the grammars?

Concerning Prakrit passages in general, I completely agree with Salomon’s opinion (1982: 137), according to which the only accurate and productive method is to give the greatest weight to the manuscripts themselves. The “correction” of forms that diverge from the grammarians’ rules, as proposed by Pischel, or the standardization of forms, as carried out by Hillebrandt or Cappeller, obscures the evidence of the manuscripts and impedes a thorough investigation of the Prakrit.

3. CONTAMINATION AND CHRONOLOGICAL LAYERS

In most manuscript traditions, contaminated manuscripts can cause major problems in establishing a stemma and editing a text. The Keralite drama manuscripts are no exception to this. One puzzling example appears in the one-act play *Dūtavākya* attributed to Bhāsa.

The epic source of the *Dūtavākya* is the *Udyogaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*.²⁸ The *Dūtavākya*’s plot is very similar to that of the epic, but abbreviated and condensed. The number of characters is reduced to five: Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, Duryodhana, the chamberlain Bādarāyaṇa, the discus Sudarśana and Dhṛtarāṣṭra. The presence of the other characters is evoked by *ākāśabhāṣita*, i.e., by the communication of a character with characters that are off-stage.²⁹ In the *Dūtavākya*, Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva is sent to the Kauravas to make a last effort to prevent the impending war. From the very beginning, Duryodhana is obstinate and refuses the Pāṇḍavas a share in the realm. An exchange of insults soon ensues. Vāsudeva realizes that his efforts are useless and wants to leave the assembly. Duryodhana tries in vain to catch him and finally rushes to fetch his bow.³⁰ Vāsudeva flies into a rage and calls his discus, Sudarśana, in

²⁸ MBh 5.70-148; chapters 94-121 as well as 131-134 draw partly on mythology and *itihāsa*.

²⁹ Cf. Daśarūpa I.128: *kiṃ bravīṣy evam ityādi vinā pātraṃ bravīti yat | śrutvevānuktam apy ekas tat syād ākāśabhāṣitam ||* “When [one actor] alone, without [another] actor [on the stage] says ‘Do you say so?’ or the like, as if hearing something, though it is [really] not spoken, that is [called] Conversation with Imaginary Persons (*ākāśabhāṣita*)” (transl. Haas 1912).

³⁰ It is not explicitly stated why Duryodhana leaves the assembly, but verse 41 and Duryodhana’s words “*dhanus tāvat*” in ms. 842 B of the Sanskrit College Manuscript Library Tripunithura, Cochin, confirm this assumption. See also Esposito 2000: 552, n. 5.

order to kill Duryodhana. However, Sudarśana reminds Vāsudeva of the karmic necessity of the impending war. Vāsudeva admits having acted in rage and sends Sudarśana back to his abode. Here we meet with a contextual inconsistency: Sudarśana is just about to go as Vāsudeva's four weapons enter without having been asked to do so.³¹ In verses 47-50 according to all editions available to me, Sudarśana describes the appearance of Śārṅga (the bow), Kaumodakī (the club), Pāñcajanya (the conch-shell) and Nandaka (the sword), one after the other. After their appearance, he sends each weapon back to its abode. In verse 51, Sudarśana again describes the features of Vāsudeva's weapons – this time they appear collectively – and sends all of them away in verse 52. This passage clearly contradicts logic. When we take a look at the manuscripts,³² most of them contain only verses 51 and 52, which describe the collective appearance and exit of the weapons. Only two manuscripts contain verses 47-50 which describe the weapons individually, and just one manuscript contains all six verses.³³ Since the double entry and exit of the weapons is meaningless, this must be considered as the result of contamination. It goes without saying that a careful editor should not include all six verses in the text of his/her edition, as Gaṇapati Śāstrī did.

In my opinion, it is not difficult to ascertain which is the original version. Verse 51 describes the collective appearance of Vāsudeva's four weapons, with the description of each weapon in one *pāda*. Verse 52 is devoted to Sudarśana's commanding the weapons to return to their abode. At some time, both verses were probably considered too simple and unadorned, and were thus replaced by verses 47-50, where every single weapon is described in a separate verse, in *kāvya* style, with comparisons and unusual vocabulary. Yet it is doubtful whether verses 51 and 52 really represent the original text: in fact, the whole scene with Sudarśana seems out of place. Up to this point, the plot follows the corresponding parts of the Udyogaparvan very closely. The fundamental conflict in the drama is the same as in the epic, and as in the corresponding passage of the Mahābhārata Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva's deification has not

³¹ Contrary to Sudarśana whom Vāsudeva had called.

³² For my critical edition of the Dūtavākya (Esposito 2010a), I relied on twenty-one manuscripts. For a description of the manuscripts, see Esposito 2010a: 34-45.

³³ The two manuscripts containing verses 47-50 are ms. 842 B of the Sanskrit College Manuscript Library Tripunithura, Cochin, and ms. 10696 B of the Oriental Manuscript Library, University of Kerala, Trivandrum. The manuscript containing all six verses is ms. Cod. Malay. 5 of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich.

yet taken place.³⁴ During the discussion with Duryodhana, Vāsudeva is depicted as quick-tempered and vulnerable, as being very “human”,³⁵ and not at all like the highest deity of the later *bhakti* ideology. When he keeps Duryodhana from catching him, his *māyā* demonstrates his power, and it is not that of a deity, but of a *yogin*. Through his *māyā* he is able to show himself in various sizes, to multiply himself and to disappear.³⁶ In this way, the drama presents a simplified version of Kṛṣṇa’s demonstration of his power in Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s *sabhā*, where he causes different deities and heroes to emanate from his body in the form of shining light (MBh 5.129.1-11).

With the appearance of Sudarśana, Vāsudeva’s character changes completely. He is no longer depicted as a mere human trickster; instead Sudarśana praises him as the supreme deity, as the highest being of the universe.³⁷ Here we observe a clear break, caused by a later insertion. Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva is no longer just the hero of the Mahābhārata as in the foregoing passages of the drama. His deification has taken place on a full scale, and traces of the beginnings of a *bhakti* ideology can be recognized.³⁸ In my opinion, the original version of the drama contained neither the appearance of Sudarśana nor the arrival of the other weapons. After Duryodhana leaves the *sabhā*, Kṛṣṇa also wants to depart. Like the parallel passage of the Mahābhārata,³⁹ this original version of the Dūtavākya probably ended with Dhṛtarāṣṭra making some kind of apology to Kṛṣṇa before his return to the Pāṇḍavas’ camp.

To sum up, the Dūtavākya seems to consist of the following chronological layers:⁴⁰ In the original version, Vāsudeva probably decides after Duryodhana’s exit (after verse 41) to leave the assembly (prose passage

³⁴ In large portions of the Mahābhārata, there is no trace of Kṛṣṇa’s later deification and his identification with Viṣṇu.

³⁵ As, for example, in MBh 5.126.

³⁶ Kṛṣṇa’s power to let Duryodhana fall from his seat or bewilder the kings as he enters the *sabhā* can also be ascribed to this yogic ability.

³⁷ See, for example, verse 43: *avyaktādir acintyātmā lokasaṃrakṣaṇodyataḥ | eko ’neka-vapuḥ śrīmān dviṣadbalaṇiṣūdanaḥ ||*. Sentences like *tricarāṇātikrāntatriloko nārāyaṇaḥ khalv atrabhavān* (prose after verse 46) clearly show Vāsudeva’s identification with Viṣṇu.

³⁸ For a more detailed analysis of the relevant passage and on a possible influence of the Pāñcarātra tradition, see Esposito 2000: 555f.

³⁹ MBh 5.129.25-28. In this passage, Dhṛtarāṣṭra asserts that he wants peace, but declares himself powerless against Duryodhana.

⁴⁰ For an overview, see also the table in the appendix below. Since the dating of the various chronological layers is outside the scope of this article, the reader is referred to Esposito 2000: 557f. on this point.

after verse 54). He is detained by Dhṛtarāṣṭra who apologizes for his son's behaviour (verse 55). Vāsudeva accepts the apology and leaves for the Pāṇḍavas' camp. From the point of view of the course of events as well as of the conception of the characters, this original version is very close to the plot of the parallel passage in the Mahābhārata. The first addition was the appearance of Sudarśana, marked by a complete change of Vāsudeva's character. This interpolation begins with Vāsudeva summoning Sudarśana (after verse 41) and continues with Sudarśana's entry (verse 42), his description of Vāsudeva as *bhagavān nārāyaṇaḥ* (verse 43) and his query about Vāsudeva's commands (verse 44). After Vāsudeva's threat to kill Duryodhana (verse 45), he tries to pacify Vāsudeva (verse 46) who finally sends him back to his abode, at which time Sudarśana leaves (prose passage after verse 54). The collective entrance and exit of the weapons (verses 51 and 52), of Garuḍa (verse 53) and of the bewildered gods (verse 54) should be regarded as a second interpolation. Contrary to Sudarśana, they come of their own accord, without being summoned by Vāsudeva. Furthermore, they do not actually appear on stage. As argued above, verses 51 and 52 describing the collective appearance and exit of the weapons could easily be considered too simple and unadorned, and were thus replaced by verses 47-50.

Thus, not only do verses 47-50 represent a later addition, but apparently the whole passage beginning with the summoning of Sudarśana and continuing up to his exit seems to be an interpolation (or rather, two successive interpolations). An editor should therefore not hesitate to mark this passage with square brackets and denote it in the apparatus as *delendum (del.)*.

Other dramas of the sometimes inconsistent Keralite tradition should be examined along similar lines: by paying attention to possible logical or conceptual breaks, consulting the manuscripts and, if possible, comparing them with their literary sources, the Mahābhārata, the Rāmāyaṇa or the works of the Bṛhatkathā tradition.⁴¹

⁴¹ In this respect some research has already been carried out: For example, Zin (1990: 180-183) as well as Ticken (1993: 9-21) refer to some inconsistencies in the Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa. However, Ahlborn (2007: 158-163) disputes Ticken's characterisation of the whole drama as "patchwork" (1993: 18f.). Scholars have also pointed out a number of irregularities in the Cārudatta (see Esposito 2004: 17f.).

CONCLUSION

First, for a thorough understanding of the text as well as for an appropriate linguistical survey it is crucial to accurately describe the orthographical conventions of the scribes. Second, in the case of Prakrit passages the “correction” or standardization of forms conceals the evidence of the manuscripts and impedes a thorough investigation of the Prakrit. All forms found in the various manuscripts should be given in the apparatus, even those that seem to be writing mistakes. Since Prakrit is not standardized like Sanskrit, supposed writing mistakes can sometimes turn out to be quite interesting and in the end “correct” forms.⁴² My third and final point is that works presenting quite inconsistent textual traditions, as in the case of the Keralite drama manuscript tradition, should be examined thoroughly as to possible logical or conceptual breaks. If later additions can be detected, we should not hesitate to mark them clearly in our critical editions.

⁴² It would, however, be exaggerated to record clear Sanskritisms like *carmma-* instead of *camma-* (Cārudatta I.8b, ms. 22848 D of the Oriental Manuscripts Library, University of Kerala, Trivandrum), *grahīdo* instead of *gahīdo* or *brahmaṇeṇa* instead of *bahmaṇeṇa* (Cārudatta III.15.12 and III.16.14, ms. 834 L of the Sanskrit College Manuscript Library Tripunithura, Cochin).

APPENDIX: OVERVIEW OF CHRONOLOGICAL LAYERS
DŪTAVĀKYA, VERSES 41-55

original version	first insertion	second insertion	third insertion
Duryodhana	tries in vain to catch Vāsudeva, threatens him (verse 41) and leaves the assembly		
	Vāsudeva Sudarśana	calls Sudarśana enters (verse 42) and describes <i>bhagavān nārāyaṇaḥ</i> (verse 43) asks Vāsudeva about his commands (verse 44)	
	Vāsudeva Sudarśana	threatens Duryodhana (verse 45) reminds Vāsudeva of the karmic necessity of the war to be (verse 46)	
	Vāsudeva	sends Sudarśana back to his abode	
		Sudarśana	describes the entering bow Śārṅga (v. 47), the club Kaumodakī (v. 48), the conch-shell Pāñcajanya (v. 49), the sword Nandaka (v. 50) and sends them back
		Sudarśana	describes the entering weapons of Vāsudeva (v. 51) addresses the weapons and sends them back (v. 52) describes the entering Garuḍa and sends him back (v. 53) describes the bewildered gods and sends them back (v. 54)
	Sudarśana leaves		
Vāsudeva Dhṛtarāṣṭra Vāsudeva	also wants to leave apologizes for the behaviour of his son (verse 55) accepts the apology and leaves		

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