

## **A bibliographic study of the knowledge tradition contained in the palm leaf manuscripts: In reference to the districts of Anuradhapura, Kandy, and Kurunegala**

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### **Abstract**

The main objective of the research is to conduct a bibliographic study on palm-leaf manuscripts in Sri Lanka aiming to disclose the knowledge traditions based on these bibliographic conventions in palm leaf manuscripts. The sample was selected based on the historical periods covering three districts. As a limitation of the study, it was identified of covering only three districts where palm leaf manuscripts are dominant in Sri Lanka Total of 575-palm leaf manuscripts from six temples was selected as a sample. First, Kahatagasdigiliya Gonagiri Rajamaha Viharaya in the Anuradhapura district which has a long history back to the reign of King Pathis II and Ruwangiriya Rajamaha Viharaya in Anuradhapura district, Secondly Ginipenda Vardhanaramaya and Medadepola Rajamaha Viharaya in Kurunegala district and the Arattana Rajamaha Viharaya and the Attaragama Temple in Kandy District were selected and all those temples were holding historical and culturally significant collections in Sri Lanka. Identifying the subject areas contained in the collections under the study, exploring the bibliographic nature and characteristics of those pamphlets as bibliographic standards followed, how the art of writing done on palm-leaf manuscripts, and their preservation and conservation were examined as knowledge tradition imbued on palm leaf manuscripts were the objectives. The other objective was to compile a descriptive bibliography for achieving some aims like emphasizing of developing a national level bibliographic

standard, revealing the contents of palm leaves, and showing the validity of a bibliography. It was revealed that adequate and properly furnished bibliographic information is not available which hinders readers to access it. The other issue is that there is no properly accepted and approved bibliographic standard for the collection, organization, and dissemination of this valuable manuscript literature. The other obstacle faced by these palm leaf depositories is the lack of use of preservation and conservation methods. The study focused on the origin and the evolution of the art of palm leaf writing including historical methods of preservation and conservation as found to be a knowledge tradition that should be sustained for re-use. Classification of palm leaf manuscripts is a dire need and thus the users will be able to easily access the information, when and where they need them. Based on this principle, a descriptive bibliography was compiled under this study as a requirement to stress the need and identification of developing a national bibliographical standard in the Sri Lankan context as well as revealing the significance of compilation and study of bibliographies on palm leaf manuscript literature. The conclusion of the study was that there had been knowledge tradition, which is embedded with the historical bibliographic conventions, practiced in palm leaf literature in the country. It was able to identify the characteristics and features relevant to these conventions like notation, art of writing styles, illustrations, conservation and restoration techniques and practices and generally found the gradual decadence of palm leaf manuscripts. A National Level Planhs been identified for developing a bibliographic standard for conservation and the preservation for palm leaf manuscript in Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** *Art of Writing, Bibliography, Bibliographical Standards, Conservation, Descriptive Bibliography*