

**An International Conference**  
**Medicine, Religion and Alchemy in South India**  
**Resources and Permutations of Siddha Traditions and Siddha Medicine**  
**25 – 27 July 2019 | Hohentübingen Castle | Tübingen University**

**From the siddha corpus to siddha medicine.**

**An exploration of manuscripts digitised for the project EAP 810**

**“Conservation, Documentation and Preservation of the Knowledge of Siddha Medicine *Roman***

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**Abstract**

Siddha refers, reductively, to the traditional medical system of Tamil Nadu. Although recognised by the government of India, its knowledge has not been systemically studied, partly due to the difficulty to access to its texts, mainly in form of manuscripts kept in libraries or held by siddha practitioners, and to their content which requests experts proficient in multiple disciplines. Indeed, the texts do not cover only the medical field, notably siddha principles of physiology, nosological categories, diagnostic methods, medicinal formulations, material medica, toxicology (insects, snakes and animal bites; food and medicine poisoning), practice of accupression (varma) and medical ethics, but also alchemy (iatrochemical processes) and complex subjects inherent to siddha tradition such as magic; philosophy and spirituality (tantrism, cult Shiva-Sakti) and astrology.

In this paper, based on the documentation of siddha manuscripts digitised for the project Endangered Archives Programme EAP810 supported by the British Library, I will discuss the decline of the siddha knowledge caused by the process of institutionalisation. Institutionalisation has not only reduced the siddha knowledge to the medical field, but also it has altered its identity in order to comply with the scientific values under which biomedicine calls itself.

The presentation will be followed by a video film entitled “A declining tradition in siddha practice. Writing on palm leaves” with the participation of Raj Kumar Vaittiyar (the copyist) and Dr. Mohana Raj (the interviewer), shooting Christian Sebastia and realisation Christian and Brigitte Sébastia (15mn).