

WHY THE PALI TEXT RASAVĀHINĪ NEEDS TO BE RE-EDITED?

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The Rasavāhinī is a 13th century non-canonical Pāli text which contains one hundred and three narratives 65 of which are of Indian origin and the rest Sri Lankan. The stories are in prose interspersed with verses. The text remains less edited despite its wide popularity and the large number of manuscripts. All available printed editions are almost identical versions of the Saraṇatissa Edition (1891-93) that has evidently consulted a very few manuscript(s) with less editorial touch. The edition does not seem to be the best representation of the Sinhalese script Pāli manuscript tradition. The collation of the manuscript witness (s) is seemingly careless as some textual portions are lost randomly. The Saddharmālaṅkāraya, the Sinhalese version of Rasavāhinī composed around the turn of the 14th century which is identical with Rasavāhinī structure and is quite useful in the reconstruction of the Rasavāhinī recension. The verses are quoted and placed as in the Rasavāhinī structure with a few exceptions. The corresponding translation of the Pāli work is found almost word for word in the Saddharmālaṅkāraya. The South East Asian Pāli manuscript tradition has been very slightly touched given the fact that it bears remarkable corresponding affinities to the Saddharmālaṅkāraya translation both of which presumably have been scribed from a copy which is very near to the original. Thus both are immeasurably useful in the reconstruction of the original. Though this popular text has been scribed in Burmese, Khmer and Laotian scripts, very little is focused on the consultation of the vitally important witnesses besides Sinhalese tradition. The South East Asian recension is seemingly closer to the hyparchetype of the Rasavāhinī as corresponding variant readings found in the Saddharmālaṅkāraya which are not found in most of the Sinhalese manuscripts. Since the Sinhalese recension is widely prevalent and heavily copied over and over again, it is hard to find a stemma codicum closer to the original. On the contrary the South East Asian tradition is coming closer to the original given the fact of relatively less distribution of the manuscript tradition. No major scholarship with the combination of South East Asian manuscript tradition and the Saddharmālaṅkāraya recension has been studied in entirety of the text as of now though some portions of the text are dealt occasionally. This paper investigates the necessity of the re-edition of the Rasavāhinī pointing out the drawbacks of the existing editions and also necessity to consult the South East Asian Pali manuscript redaction.

Keywords: Rasavāhinī, Saddharmālaṅkāraya, Sinhalese script Pali manuscript, South East Asian redaction