



Primoz Pecenko - "Pali texts and their manuscripts: a case of 'lost' manuscripts mentioned in old Pali bibliographic sources"

In this seminar I will discuss my research of the Pali subcommentaries on the first four Nikayas and show that there exist two sets of such subcommentaries and not just a single set which we have in printed form. The works of modern Pali scholarship, which in this case agree with the Theravada tradition, also usually mention only one set of the subcommentaries. However, according to some Pali bibliographic sources and catalogues of Pali manuscripts held in various libraries in Myanmar and Sri Lanka, there seem to exist another set of the subcommentaries on the four Nikayas which has been ignored/omitted by the Theravada tradition and also considered either "lost" or "non-existent" by modern Pali scholarship.

My recent discovery of a Pali manuscript of one of the "lost" subcommentaries in Myanmar gives a completely new perspective on the historical development of the two sets of the subcommentaries and in a wider sense also on our understanding of the available information about the history of Pali literature. I will attempt to discuss the following important issues which issued from this discovery:

1. The existence of the "lost" manuscript proves that the information in some older Pali bibliographic sources-where both sets are mentioned-is correct and that both the Theravada tradition as well as modern Pali scholarship ignored the 'lost' texts and the bibliographic information about them. Why?
2. The analysis of the available printed editions and catalogued manuscripts also indicates that the information about the sub-commentaries given in the works of modern Pali scholarship seems to be influenced by the traditional Theravada scholarship (both mention only one set)-although the information about the "lost" texts was available.
3. My discovery of the above mentioned manuscript, which is listed in the oldest Pali bibliographic text (Saddhammasangaha), also proves that this oldest bibliographic text is often considered less reliable by modern Pali scholarship-seems to be much more reliable than the later bibliographic sources (e.g. Sasanavamsa) which have been considered a very important source for modern history of Pali literature. Therefore the sources for the available "history" of Pali literature as well as the "history" itself need to be re-examined in the light of the information given in the older bibliographic texts, catalogues of Pali manuscripts and the manuscripts which have not been researched yet.
4. Considering all this, our understanding of the traditional Theravada transmission of the texts will have to be re-examined as well.