

## FOREWORD

What is it to determine the 'meaning' of an old text? On the one hand, we can establish what it has meant to the people who have used it. If the text is religious, that is to establish what it has meant to the body of believers (who may of course themselves have disagreed). On the other hand, we can try to establish what it meant to its author or authors. In the religious case, this is what is known as fundamentalism; we are concerned to establish what the sage or prophet said to his original disciples. If the text is a scripture believed within its own tradition to be directly inspired by God, the fundamentalist who claims that the tradition has misunderstood its scriptures will cause bitter controversy.

Luckily Buddhists are not so precariously placed, for they believe their scriptures to be of human, not divine origin. This makes it possible for those with divergent interpretations to engage in rational discussion and promote mutual understanding. A bold claim — but one which this volume substantiates.

Miss Horner, Mr. Norman and the Ven. Dr. Rahula are ('are', for Miss Horner's scholarship survives her body) three scholars who agree that the most important criteria for determining the meaning of a Pali text are two: philological scholarship and the testimony of the Theravādin tradition. But they differ in the comparative weight which they accord to those two criteria. Miss Horner and Dr. Rahula require very strong arguments before they are prepared to abandon an interpretation found in the tradition represented by the commentaries and other Pali texts. Their combined erudition here presents the meaning of the *Sutta-nipāta* substantially as it has been handed down in Theravādin tradition. For Mr. Norman, on the other hand, the commentaries are not necessarily the most reliable witnesses. He has used the methods of historical linguistics and drawn on his unrivalled knowledge of Middle Indo-Aryan philology in an attempt to arrive at the text's original meaning.

It would have been possible to publish, either together or separately, two complete separate translations of the *Sutta-nipāta*. However, that would be wasteful, because the interpretation of over three quarters of the text is uncontroversial, in that the two approaches yield the same results. Hence the method

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adopted: Mr. Norman's translation (on which volume II will provide his notes) is printed in full, while at the end of each *sutta* are printed the verse passages which Miss Horner and Dr. Rahula translate differently. This volume thus presents the reader with a unique opportunity to compare the results of the two approaches.

That this volume finally appears, after a gestation of over a decade, is due largely to the unselfish labours of Dr. Steven Collins, who has put it together in its final form. The chief regret of all concerned is that Miss Horner did not live to see its publication.

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## NOTICE

- ( ) Words in round brackets are those which need to be supplied in the English translation, although not found in the original Pāli.
- < > Numbers in pointed brackets refer to the pages of the edition of the *Sutta-nipāta* by Dines Andersen and H. Smith (Pali Text Society, 1913), upon which this translation is based, unless otherwise stated
- [ ] Words and phrases in square brackets are those for which an alternative translation is given at the end of the *sutta*