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A NOTE ON THE RŪPĀVATĀRA.

BY

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Professor M. Rangacharya, to whom we owe an excellent edition of the *Rūpāvatāra* discusses the date of its author, Dharmakīrti, in his learned introduction. He points out that the *Kāśikā-vṛtti* is repeatedly cited in the *Rūpāvatāra*, and that consequently the author must have lived later than the 9th century A. D., the date usually assigned to the completion of that great work by Vāmana and Jayāditya. He also points out that Haradatta and Jinendra, who annotated the *Kāśikā*, are also mentioned by name in the *Dhātupratyaya-ṣaṅcīkā*, the second part of the *Rūpāvatāra*. The lower limit for the date of Dharmakīrti was found by him in the mention of the *Rūpāvatāra* in the *Lakṣaṇadīpikā* of Gaurāṅārya and the *Tantrapradīpa*, also called *Anunyāsa*, of Maitreya-rakṣita. He reached the conclusion that the *Rūpāvatāra* must therefore have been composed earlier than the 13th century A. D., and attained celebrity in the 14th.

The grammarian Dharmakīrti, for whom a date between the 9th and the 13th century was thus reached, was sought to be identified by the same scholar with the Bhikṣu of that name mentioned¹ in the *Mahāvamśa* as the contemporary of Parākramabāhu I (1153-1186), and perhaps also the author of a Pāli grammar and the bearer of the surname Saṅgharāja. This identification found some support in the opening verses of the *Rūpāvatāra* in which the author salutes 'sarvajña anantaguṇa,' the Buddha, at the commencement of his work.

But the place of the *Rūpāvatāra* as the beginner's manual of Sanskrit grammar had become well established much earlier than the fourteenth century. This is now clear from several Cōḷa inscriptions mentioning the study of the *Rūpāvatāra* as part of the curriculum of higher Sanskrit schools. Thus the Eṅṅāyiram ins-

1. Ch. 76 v. 32.

cription¹ of the reign of Rājendra I (1012-1044) makes provision for feeding forty pupils who learn *Rūpāvatāra*:*-rūpāvatāram kēṭṭpār nārpaḍiṇmar*, and for the maintenance of one teacher (*rūpāvatāram vakkāṇiṭṭpāṇ oruvaṇ*) on a salary of three *kurūṇis* of paddy per diem and one half of a *kalaṇju* of gold per annum. A similar provision is made at Tribhuvani² for the maintenance of a teacher of *Rūpāvatāra* in a college in the reign of Rājādhirāja I, the successor of Rājendra I: *Rūpāvatāraṅ-kēṭṭippāṇ oruvaṇukku nel tūṇiṭṭ-padakkum*, a wage twice as much as in the record cited above; the same inscription provided again for the feeding of thirty pupils studying this work—*rūpāvatāraṅkēṭṭpār muṭṭpaḍiṇmar*. It is worth mentioning that both these inscriptions state that there were other students and teachers in each of these colleges pursuing the study of advanced grammar (Vyākaraṇa). Yet another record³ dated A. D. 1067 gives details relating to a third educational institution at Tirumukkūḍal. Here both Vyākaraṇa and *Rūpāvatāra* were taught by a single teacher who was paid a daily wage of one *tūṇi*, and ten *kāśus* apparently in the year: *vyākaraṇam rūpāvatāram vakkāṇikkum bhaṭṭāṇ oruvaṇukku nāḷonṇukku nel tūṇiyum kāśu pattum*. His pupils numbered twenty in all: *vyākaraṇamum rūpāvatāramum kēṭṭkum brāhmaṇac-cāttirar iruṭpaḍiṇmarum*. These instances are enough to show that the popularity of the *Rūpāvatāra* dates back at least to the eleventh century. It is thus clear that the Ceylonese monk who was the contemporary of Parākramabāhu I could not have been the author of this work. In fact, the cautious scholar that he was, Professor Rangacharya was well aware of the slender evidence on which he based his view, and said so in so many words. "In the absence of other strong evidence," he wrote, "it is not possible to decide that this Dharmakīrti and no other was the author of this work. But the fact that in the Kēraḷa and Tamil countries the *Rūpāvatāra* was once in very common use may go to support a Ceylonese origin for the author of that work."⁴

It is noteworthy that Rangacharya also noticed⁵ another reference to the *Rūpāvatāra* though he missed its significance.

1. 333 of 1917.

2. 173 of 1919.

3. 182 of 1915.

4. Translated from the Sanskrit Introduction p. xv.

5. XX *ibid*, p. ix n. i.

This occurs in the commentary of Guṇasāgara to Amītasāgara's *Yāpparuṅgala-k-kārikai*. In fact the whole passage where it occurs is of unusual literary interest and no apology is needed for our transcribing and translating it here:

“ Inṅūl eṅṅa peyarttō eṅiṅ, pālittiyam eṅṅum pāgadavilakkaṇamum piṅgaḷam eṅṅum candōpicitamum pōla kārikaiyāppirṅāy, guṇakāṅkiyam eṅṅum karu-nāṭakac-candamē pōla magaḍū munṅi-laittāy avaiyaḍakkamum uḍaiyaḍāy, mayēccurar yāppē pōla udāraṇameḍuttōdi, isaittamiḷ-c-ceyyuṭṭuraik-kōvaiyē pōlavum arumaraiyagattaṭṭaga-vōttin varukkakkōvaiyē pōlavum urūpāvatārattirku nītakacculōkamē pōlavum mudaniṅaippuṇarttiya-vilakkiyattadāy, vēdattirku niruttamum viyākaraṇattirku-k-kārikaiyum avinaynār yāppirku nālaḍinārpadumpōla, yāpparuṅgalam eṅṅum yāppirkaṅgamāy, alaṅgāramuḍaittāga-c-ceyya-ppaṭṭamaiyāl Yāpparuṅgalakkārikai eṅṅum peyarttu.”

“ If it be asked what the name of this work is, it is called *Yāpparuṅgala-k-kārikai* because: (1) it is composed in the form *Kārikai* (*Kārikā*) stanzas like the Prākṛt grammar called *Pālittiyam* (?) and the Chandōviciti also called *Piṅgaḷam*; (2) it is addressed to a woman and begins with an apologia like the Kanarese (work on) prosody called *Guṇakāṅkiyam*; (3) it cites illustrations like the prosody of Mahēśvara; (4) it contains mnemonic verses (composed of first words) similar to the *Kōvai*¹ of *Seyyul-turais* in the *Isai-t-tamiḷ*, the *Kōvai* of a *varga* in the text of each *aṣṭaka* within the veda, and the ‘leading stanzas’² (*nītaka-ślōka*) in the *Rūpāvatāra*; and (5) like the *Nirukta* to the veda, the *Kārikā*³ to the *Vyākaraṇa*, the *Nālaḍi-nārpadu* to the prosody of *Avinayanār*, this work has been composed as a beautiful pendant to the work on prosody called *Yāpparuṅgalam*.” A perusal of the ślōkas that occur frequently in the course of the *Rūpāvatāra* and of the mnemonic verses in the *Yāpparuṅgala-k-kārikai* will show clearly the aptness of Guṇasāgara's comparison.

Now, the date of Guṇasāgara, the disciple and younger contemporary of Amītasāgara, has been settled with great probability to be the early part of the eleventh century,⁴ that is about the

1. Lit. stringing together (of first words of a series of passages or verses).

2. On the analogy of ‘leading questions.’

3. Of *Bhartṛhari*; or possibly the *Kārikās* in the *Mahābhāṣya* and *Kāśikā*.

4. *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. v, pp. 204-9.

same time as the inscriptions cited above. It should be noted that Dharmakīrti (Dharmakīrti) is a very common name among Buddhist monks, and without more specific details about the author of the *Rūpāvatāra* than we seem to have now, it will not be possible to determine his exact date.

That the *Rūpāvatāra* of the *Kārikai* and the Cōḷa inscriptions cited above is the work of Dharmakīrti on Sanskrit grammar and not the *Prākṛtarūpāvatāra* of Simharāja may be presumed as a matter of course. The absence of any verses in the *Prākṛtarūpāvatāra* which could be referred to as *nīlakaśloka*s, and the citation¹ by Simharāja of Kṣīrasvāmin, an eleventh century writer, convert the presumption into a certainty. It is possible that the *Prākṛtārūpāvatāra*, as its name implies, had the work of Dharmakīrti for its model.

One last observation remains to be made. If our discussion has pushed back the lower limit for the date of *Rūpāvatāra* from the twelfth to the tenth century, the upper limit is now seen to be much earlier than the ninth century; for the *Kāśikāvṛtti* appears to have been completed not in the ninth century as Rangacharya held, but sometime in the seventh century, a commentary on that work having been composed about 700 A. D.²

1. *Prākṛtarūpāvatāra*: ed. Hultsch: viii, 11, p. 37.

2. Keith-Sanskrit Literature, p. 430.

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