

**JOURNAL OF THE
PALI
TEXT SOCIETY. 1882**

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T. W. RHYS DAVIDS

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PALI
TEXT SOCIETY. 1882**

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PALI TEXT SOCIETY.

1882.

EDITED BY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PROSPECTUS OF THE SOCIETY	vii
REPORT OF THE SOCIETY FOR 1882, BY T. W. RHYS DAVIDS.	1
LISTS OF MEMBERS	15
LETTERS FROM THEBAS IN CEYLON	21
LIST OF MSS. IN THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY, OXFORD, BY O. FRANKFURTER	30
LIST OF MSS. IN THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE AT PARIS, BY LÉON FREE	32
LIST OF MSS. IN THE ORIENTAL LIBRARY, KANDY, BY H. C. P. BELL	38
LIST OF MSS. IN THE COLOMBO MUSEUM, BY LOUIS DE ZOYSA	46

PALI TEXT SOCIETY.

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This Society has been started in order to render accessible to students the rich stores of the earliest Buddhist literature now lying unedited and practically unused in the various MSS. scattered throughout the University and other Public Libraries of Europe.

The historical importance of these Texts can scarcely be exaggerated, either in respect of their value for the history of folk-lore, or of religion, or of language. It is already certain that they were all put into their present form within a very limited period, probably extending to less than a century and a half (about B.C. 400–250). For that period they have preserved for us a record, quite uncontaminated by filtration through any European mind, of the every-day beliefs and customs of a people nearly related to ourselves, just as they were passing through the first stages of civilization. They are our best authorities for the early history of that interesting system of religion so nearly allied to some of the latest speculations among ourselves, and which has

influenced so powerfully, and for so long a time, so great a portion of the human race—the system of religion which we now call Buddhism. The sacred books of the early Buddhists have preserved to us the sole record of the only religious movement in the world's history which bears any close resemblance to early Christianity. In the history of speech they contain unimpeachable evidence of a stage in language midway between the Vedic Sanskrit and the various modern forms of speech in India. In the history of Indian literature there is nothing older than these works, excepting only the Vedic writings; and all the later classical Sanskrit literature has been profoundly influenced by the intellectual struggle of which they afford the only direct evidence. It is not, therefore, too much to say that the publication of this unique literature will be no less important for the study of history,—whether anthropological, philological, literary, or religious,—than the publication of the Vedas has already been.

The Subscription to the Society is One Guinea a year, or Five Guineas for six years, payable in advance. Each subscriber receives, post free, the publications of the Society.

It is hoped that persons who are desirous to aid the publication of these important historical texts will give Donations to be spread if necessary over a term of years.

*** Subscriptions for 1883 are now due, and it is earnestly requested that subscribers will send in their payments without putting the Society to the expense and trouble of personally asking for them. All who can conveniently do so should send the Five Guineas for six years, to their own benefit and that of the Society also.*

REPORT OF THE PĀLI TEXT SOCIETY

FOR 1882.

BY T. W. RHYS DAVIDS.

I HAVE to congratulate the members of the Pāli Text Society on the fact of its having safely survived the anxious period of birth, and of its having fairly entered upon what we may all hope will be a career of such usefulness as will fulfil the promise with which it was started into life. Its birth was announced in my Hibbert Lectures in the May of 1881. At first—as was only indeed to be reasonably expected—subscriptions came in but slowly, and some of those friends who were its first supporters may have been anxious at the long delay which has elapsed before they have seen the first fruits of their subscriptions. I trust their fears have now subsided: and I would take this opportunity of pointing out how great is the debt which we owe to these first adherents of a good cause that was then without friends, and that but for their timely and generous aid might have died still-born. When we recollect that a generation elapsed after the publication of Turnour's Mahā-vaṅsa, and again another generation after the publication of Fausböll's Dhamma-pada, before any other Pāli Text of importance saw the light, we may well suppose that had it not been for the manner in which our first subscribers led the forlorn hope, another generation would have passed before the objects of the Society would have been at all attained. As it is, further effort was encouraged. It became certain towards the close of 1881 that the Society would live. And the