

C810043 : MAJOR THAI LANGUAGE

KEY WORD : ATTHAKHATHA JATAKA / DIDACTIC LITERATURE

SAIWAROON NOINIMIT : ATTHAKHATHA JATAKA : A STUDY AS THAI DIDACTIC TEXT AND THE RELATION TO OTHER DIDACTIC LITERATURES. THESIS ADVISOR : ASSO.PROF.

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ISBN 974-333-750-4

The thesis aims at studying Atthakhatha Jataka (Jātakatthakathā) as Thai didactic literature in order to see its value and significance as well as its relation to other Thai texts of didactic literature.

The result of this study reveals that Atthakhatha Jataka has been widely known since the Dvaravati period. The stone engraving of the stories from Jataka with explanation is also found during the Sukhothai period. By the Ayutthaya period, it is found that the most popular jatakas are "vessantarajataka" and the other stories in "Dasajataka" (the last ten jatakas) from Atthakhatha Jataka. Their popularity continues upto the Ratanakosin period. The complete translation of Atthakhatha Jataka of the National Library version was done during the reign of King Ananda Mahidol in 1940. Then, Atthakhatha Jataka is widely known among the Thais as religious stories which become Thai literature from Pali origin.

The stories in Atthakhatha Jataka aim at teaching people the principles of living, of treating others, of family life, of ruling and serving the country. These principles are likewise emphasized in several Thai didactic texts.

The outstanding feature of Atthakhatha Jataka is the use of various kinds of parables that teach and explain Dharma. This characteristics has a great influence on the creation of demonstrative tales in other Thai texts of didactic literature.

As a Thai didactic text, Atthakhatha Jataka is most valuable as a thesaurus of didactic tales which are influential for all Thais at all time, especially the teaching at the code of behaviour in Thai society which is in accordance with the principle of "Karma" in Buddhism. Moreover, Atthakhatha Jataka is also the prototype of other jatakas originated in Thailand. Atthakhatha Jataka is also rich resource of Thai literary creation both for the stories, the characters and the main ideas. The explanation of the principle of Karma which is very prominent in the Atthakhatha Jataka has made this text one of the most important literary texts cherished by the Thais upto the present time.

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