Rājovāda : An Admonition to a King

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Samatthe dhammakathike vicāretvā nimantiya
Rājovādāti saddhamme suūanto so punappunam

(King Kirtti Śri Rājasinha), sought out from among those ... the appropriate preachers, invited them and listened ever and again to the Rājovāda and other portions of the sacred scriptures.

In commenting on the above statement of the Cūlavanaśa (Cr.) that King Kirtti Śri Rājasinha (1747-1782 A.D.) listened to a learned discourse on duties of kingship, W. Geiger, in a footnote says² that the Rājovāda mentioned therein could be the Rājavagga of the Anguttara Nikāya (III, 147ff). A treatise named Rājovāda-vattu is mentioned³ by M. H. Bode as having been compiled by Nānābhivāsa Sāṅgharāja of Burma sometime after 2326 B.E. (1782/3 A.D.). Very little is known of either the Rājovāda or the Rājovāda-vattu of Ceylonese and Burmese traditions. From the title of the works it appears probable that the subject matter of these documents was related to duties of kingship or admonitions to kings on matters connected with statecraft.

Among the ola manuscripts preserved in Sir D. B. Jayatilaka Memorial Library, Y.M.B.A., Colombo, the one marked 17.2882 contains, among several others, a document written in the Pali language with a paraphrase in Sinhalese, containing as its subject matter Rājovāda (Admonition to King). The manuscript belonged to the collection of the late Sir D. B. Jayatilaka and so far as I am aware, it has not been published in any work known to me. It measures 14" x 2" and consists of 46 leaves of writing. The Rājovāda is confined to 16 leaves of writing (fifteen of which occupy both sides) and the sixteenth confined to the obverse only. In the sequel I propose to give a brief outline of its contents as they may be of interest to historians and others interested in the cultural, economic and political aspects of that particular period of Ceylon History.

2. Cr., p. 270, n. 1.