

The Rakkhaṅga-Sannas-Cūrṇikāva and the Date of the Arrival of Arakanese Monks in Ceylon

THE *Rakkhaṅga-sannas-cūrṇikāva* is a short document of eight palm leaves now deposited in the Library of the British Museum, London¹. On the evidence of the Sinhalese script employed in it, the document can be assigned to the eighteenth century. The script is, however, more developed than that used in the letter sent by King Narēndrasīṃha to the Dutch Political Council in 1726². The first four leaves of the manuscript are devoted to a long list of pompous epithets intended to glorify the King of Kandy at the time the *cūrṇikāva* was indited. Of the other four leaves, three leaves and the first page of the last leaf are devoted to a very brief account of the first mission sent by King Vimaladharmasūriya II to Arakan in the year 1693 for the purpose of examining the possibilities of obtaining the services of some competent Buddhist monks to re-establish the *upasampadā* in Ceylon.

A more detailed account of this mission together with a brief account of the subsequent mission that ultimately accompanied the monks from Arakan to Ceylon had been found by D. B. Jayatilaka who published a summary of this account some years ago, leaving the task of editing the document with notes and explanations to a later occasion.³ Judging from this summary already published, this document would have been of great interest to those engaged in studying the cultural and social history of the kingdom of Kandy, if it had been published in its entirety. The *Rakkhaṅga-sannas-cūrṇikāva* will also be of interest to such scholars, for, besides supplementing what is contained in the document referred to by Jayatilaka, it also throws some light on some aspects of Kandyan diplomatic practice.

1. Or. 6611 (258).

2. The Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register, Vol. I, 1915-1916, Plates III and IV.

3. Jayatilaka, D. B., Sinhalese Embassies to Arakan, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch, Vol. XXXV, Colombo, 1941, pp. 1-6.

The account of the first mission to Arakan is given in this document in the form of a narrative clearly meant to be recited in the presence of the King. It is written throughout in an eulogistic vein and the author, possibly, expected to be rewarded for his literary labours.⁴ Unlike the authors of the accounts of the mission sent to Siam by King Kirti Śrī Rājasimha,⁵ the author of this document does not appear to have been very keen to give a full account of the mission to Arakan. His sole aim, it would seem, was to relate the main events of the mission all too briefly in a manner suitable for formal recitation.

According to the *Rakkhaṅga-sannas-cūrṇikāva* the envoys selected to proceed to Arakan were Bāminivattē Disānāyaka Mudiyaṅsē, Doḍaṁvela Hērat Mudiyaṅsē and Śivāgama Paṇḍita Mudiyaṅsē. They left for Arakan in the year named Śrī Mukha, i.e. the year 1615 of the Śaka era.⁶ The envoys were accompanied to Colombo by Galagama Mohoṭṭāla and Māradagoḍa Muhandirama. At Colombo the envoys embarked on a small ship named *Ūkuru*⁷ on Thursday, the seventh day of the bright half of the month of Āṣaḷa,⁸ with the intention of re-embarking on a *kappara*⁹ at the South Indian port of Tūttukuḍiya.¹⁰ The ship left Colombo on Sunday, the tenth day of the bright half of the same month.¹¹

Though it is not stated so in the document, the envoys evidently travelled in a *kappara*, as they intended, from Tūttukuḍiya to Arakan, with the object, we are told, of finding out the state of the latter country and of getting a letter from the king of that country indicating his willingness to help the King of Kandy in the matter of re-establishing the *upa-sampadā* in Ceylon.

4. A *cūrṇikāva* is a speech in prose where there is a pause at intervals of every five *mātrā*, syllabic instants. Usually there is an attempt to introduce rhyme and alliteration into the words. *Cūrṇikāvas* are usually employed to eulogise or bless a person. It is possible that this particular *cūrṇikāva* was composed by one of the envoys and recited by him before the King, on the occasion when *sannas*, land grants, were presented to the envoys. Hence the name *Rakkhaṅga-sannas-cūrṇikāva*.

5. Pieris, P. E., Kirti Sri's Embassy to Siam, J. R. A. S., C. B., Vol. XVIII, 1903, pp. 17-44; Fernando, P. E. E., An Account of the Kandyan Mission sent to Siam in 1750, The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies, Vol. II, Peradeniya, 1959, pp. 37-83.

6. The date given in the MS. in words is 1605. Obviously it should read 1615.

7. This name is suggestive of a Burmese name.

8. 29th June 1693. The writer is indebted to Mr B. Liyanamana for converting the dates given in the two MSS. into their modern equivalents.

9. From Tamil, *kappal*, ship. Here, perhaps, it indicates a larger ship than craft used in journeys between Colombo and South Indian Ports.

10. Modern Tuticorin in South India.

11. Sunday, 2nd July, 1693.

The document does not say anything about the experience of the envoys either on their way to or after their arrival in Arakan. However the envoys returned to Colombo with a royal message from the King of Arakan to the King of Kandy. On hearing of their arrival in Colombo the King despatched nine officers to fetch the royal letter to Kandy. The officers who were thus sent to Colombo were: Yālegoḍa Hērat Mudiyaṅsē, the Adigar; Golahāla Kuruppu Mudiyaṅsē, the *gajanāyaka nilamē*; Bōgomuvē Ēkanāyaka Mudiyaṅsē, the *batvaḍana nilamē*; Kirivavulē Virakōn Mudiyaṅsē, the *disāva* of the Four Korales; Girāgama Hērat Mudiyaṅsē, the *disāva* of the Seven Korales; Raṁmolaka Virasiṁha Mudiyaṅsē, the *disāva* of Mātālē; Kobbāvala Disānāyaka Mudiyaṅsē, the *nānāyakkāra lēkam* and Gampahē Vijayatuṅga Mudiyaṅsē, the *paḍikāra lēkam*.¹²

These nine officers received the royal letter sent by the King of Arakan at a place called Kosgama¹³ and brought it to Kandy with due honour, and handed it over to the *Maha-Aramudala*¹⁴ on Wednesday, the full moon day of the month of Vesak in the year called Bhava, i.e., the year 1616 of the Śaka era.¹⁵ Then the royal letter was wrapped in a *saḷuva*,¹⁶ sealed and deposited securely in the upper story of the *vaiyāliya*.

In the same year, on Thursday, the second day of the dark half of the month of Āṣaḷa,¹⁷ Vanigasēkara Vammakku-rāla,¹⁸ Doḍaṁvala Mohoṭṭāla, the Brahmin of the *Gaṇa-devi-kōvīla*,¹⁹ Virasēkara Kankānāma²⁰ and Vēvālvala Liyana-Nayide²¹ brought the royal letter to a pavilion near the *jambu* tree, where the seals of the letter were broken open and the contents of the letter read by the King. Then the letter was again wrapped in the *saḷuva*, sealed and handed over to the five officers mentioned above to be securely deposited in the upper storey of the *vaiyāliya*. The document ends here and does not deal at all with the second mission sent to Arakan by King Vimaladharmasūriya to fetch monks to Ceylon.

12. It is to be noted that some of the most important officers of the King, including the Adigar, were sent to meet the party bringing the letter from the King of Arakan.

13. A village in Hēvāgam Kōralē in the Avissāvella Electoral District.

14. The Royal Treasury

15. 29th April, 1694, which was a Sunday and not a Wednesday as stated in the MS.

16. A piece of silk, a shawl.

17. Thursday, 28th June, 1694.

18. One of the two principal officers of the Royal Treasury.

19. The temple of Gaṇeṣa.

20. A *kankānāma* had both military and civil duties to perform. His rank was equal to that of a corporal.

21. A clerk, a scribe.

In spite of the difference in length between the document referred to by Jayatilaka and the *Rakkhaṅga-sannas-cūrṇikāva*, they agree substantially with regard to the main events of the journey to and from Arakan. There are a few apparent discrepancies in the dates given in the two documents, but they can easily be reconciled as the dates given in the two documents refer to two different sets of events. The present document, for example, does not mention the date on which the mission left Kandy but states that the envoys embarked on ship at Colombo on Thursday, the seventh day of the bright half of the month of Āsaḷa.²² Jayatilaka's document, however, states that the envoys left Kandy on Thursday, the seventh day of the dark half of the month of Poṣon in the year 1693²³ and arrived in four days in Colombo, where they remained for ten days before taking ship for Tūttukuḍiya. Thus even according to this document the date of embarkation should fall on Thursday, the seventh day of the bright half of the month of Āsaḷa.²⁴ The present document again does not mention the date on which the envoys returning from Arakan arrived in Kandy but states that the envoys handed over the letter they brought from the King of Arakan to the *Maha-Aramudala* at Kandy on Wednesday, the full moon day of the month of Vesak in the year 1616 of the Śaka era,²⁵ whereas according to Jayatilaka's document the envoys returned to Kandy on the eleventh day of the bright half of the month of Vesak.²⁶ It is quite possible that the envoys actually did arrive in Kandy on the eleventh day and handed over the letter to the *Maha-Aramudala* four days later.

An important detail that is not mentioned in Jayatilaka's document is the procedure that was followed by the Court, evidently, according to well-established practice, in receiving the letter sent by the King of Arakan. According to the present document it was not placed in the hands of the King immediately after it was brought to the capital but was at first deposited in the *vaiyāliya* and on an appointed day it was brought to a pavilion in the vicinity of the Palace by some officers. It was here in the pavilion that the King formally read the letter. Presumably the letter was not shown to the King immediately after its arrival in the capital because a special auspicious day had to be found for such formal acts to be performed by the King. It is also significant that among the five officers who placed the letter in the pavilion were the Brahmin priest of the *Gaṇa-devi-kōvila*,

22. Thursday, 29th June, 1693.

23. Thursday, 15th June, 1693.

24. Thursday, 29th June, 1693. The envoys would have sailed on the tenth day.

25. 29th April, 1694, which was a Sunday.

26. 25th April, 1694.

the clerk named Vēvālvala Liyana-Nayide and the *vannakkurāla* named Vaṇigasēkara. These officers, it would appear, were by custom required to perform these duties in the Palace on such occasions.

Another important detail that is mentioned in the *Rakkhaṅga-sannas-cūrṇikāva* is the manner in which the letter from the King of Arakan was wrapped and sealed to be deposited in the *vaiyāliya*. It is evident that this document was not sealed in the manner such diplomatic documents were sealed in the courts and chancelleries of Europe at the time. Here the document was wrapped in a *saḷuva* and then the whole packet was tied up and sealed. Then it was deposited in the *vaiyāliya* which may have performed the functions of a palace archives in Kandyan times. The *vaiyāliya* or the *vaiyāli-maḍuva* as it was sometimes called, appears to have been situated in a section of the Palace itself. In the last stages of Kandyan rule the *vaiyāli-maḍuva* had been situated on the northern verandah of the Old Palace at Kandy. There had also been a well called the *vaiyāli-liṅda* just below the Old Palace. According to a tradition which has been recorded by Turner the name *vaiyāliya* had been given to a section of the verandah of the Palace and to the well mentioned above on account of a man named Veyiyāli who used to sleep in the verandah of the Palace.²⁷ This explanation of the name, however, seems to have been invented in the reign of the last king of Kandy. But the name occurs in the present document which was written probably towards the end of the seventeenth century and the explanation of the name has to be sought elsewhere. In the seventeenth century, in addition to being a palace archives, the *vaiyāliya* seems to have been the office where deeds and other land documents were prepared to be issued to members of the public. A land document dated 1700 states that it was granted at the *vaiyāliye-kammattama*.²⁸ The word *kammattama* has been explained as a smithy or forge,²⁹ but here it appears to have the sense of 'office,' and *vaiyāliye-kammattama* probably indicated that section of the *vaiyāliya* where land documents were prepared to be issued to the public.

According to Burmese sources the despatch of Buddhist monks to Ceylon from Arakan had taken place in the last year of the reign of an Arakanese king named Sandathudamma, namely, in A.D. 1684.³⁰ If we trust the

27. Turner, L. J. B., *The Town of Kandy about the Year 1815*, *The Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register*, Vol. IV, Colombo, 1918-1919, p. 74. Here Turner discusses the name *vaiyāliya* and the situation of the *vaiyāliya*.

28. Lawrie, A. C., *A Gazetteer of the Central Province of Ceylon*, 2 vols. Colombo, 1896-1898, p. 877.

29. Pieris, Ralph, *Sinhalese Social Organization*, Colombo, 1956, p. 297.

30. Harvey, G. E., *History of Burma*, London, 1925, p. 145.

dates given in the Sinhalese documents the King of Arakan who was on the throne when the first mission was sent from Ceylon must have been King Sandathuriyadamma whose reign lasted for twelve years from 1684 to 1696.³¹ It is possible, therefore, that the Burmese sources had confused the two names Sandathudamma and Sandathuriyadamma and also assumed that the monks were sent from Arakan immediately after the arrival of the first mission from Ceylon in Arakan. According to the document referred to by Jayatilaka the Arakanese monks arrived in Kandy towards the middle of the year 1697 and were formally received by King Vimaladharmasūriya II on the 13th day of the bright half of the month of Bak in the year 1619 of the Saka era.³² Thus these monks must have been despatched from Arakan in the reign of King Mayokpia, 1696-1698.³³ The Dutch Governor of Ceylon at the time, Gerret De Heere, has recorded in his Diary that he received from the Dutch Political Council in Colombo, on 20th August 1697, a letter addressed to the King of Arakan.³⁴ In De Heere's Diary the King of Arakan is referred to as King Moeroepia Dhammarajia. The letter was probably in regard to the monks already brought to Ceylon in Dutch ships. The same Diary has recorded that the Arakanese monks arrived at Sitavaka on 12th July, 1697.³⁵ The monks were evidently on their way to Kandy though this is not made clear by De Heere. It will be seen that there is a discrepancy between the date given in the document referred to by Jayatilaka and that given in De Heere's Diary for if the monks arrived at Sitavaka, on their way to Kandy, in July, they could not have been in Kandy in the month of Bak. Possibly it may be that an advance party of monks arrived in Kandy in the month of Bak and that a second batch of monks, probably, those who travelled in the second ship,³⁶ arrived at Sitavaka on 12th July, 1697, on their way to Kandy.

In view of the evidence provided by these two Sinhalese documents and the Diary of De Heere it can be concluded that the monks from Arakan arrived in Ceylon in 1697 and not in 1684 as is stated in Burmese sources. If the monks were sent from Arakan in 1684, they would have reached Ceylon in the reign of King Rājasimha II, 1629-1687. But there is no record of such an event having taken place in the reign of this king.

P. E. E. FERNANDO

31. *Ibid.*, p. 372.

32. Thursday, 25th March, 1697.

33. Harvey, p. 372.

34. Diary of Occurrences During the Tour of Gerret De Heere from Colombo to Jaffna, translated by Sophia Anthonisz, Colombo, 1914, p. 24.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

36. In 1697 Arakanese monks travelled to Ceylon in two ships, provided by the Dutch, and also returned in Dutch ships to their country after completing their work in Ceylon. Memoir of Cornelis Joan Simons, translated by Sophia Anthonisz, Colombo, 1914, p. 7.