

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE *VAIJAYANTA-TANTRA*

By

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A *Śilpaśāstra* work which has been in existence in Śrī Laṅkā for a considerably long time is the *Vaijayanta-tantra*, a Sanskrit composition in verse, with word-to-word paraphrase in Sinhalese. There are over 1600 stanzas, mostly composed in the metre named Anuṣṭubh. Ananda COOMARASWAMY says that a translation of this work was not available to him at the time he wrote his monumental work *The Medieval Sinhalese Art*. "A short chapter of the *Bṛhad Saṁhitā* (Part II, Ch. 2) deals with royal forehead plates. They are doubtless also referred to in the *Vaijayantaya*, the *śāstra* used by Sinhalese jewellers. In this work are described the sixty-four kinds of royal ornaments and many other kinds of jewellery and metal work, as in the verse quoted detailing the measurements of writing styles. The translation of this work, which Mudaliyar E. R. Goonaratne kindly undertook to prepare for me, is unfortunately not available at the time of writing the present chapter."¹

It is not known whether Mudaliyar GOONARATNE ever attempted a translation of this work or whether he completed his undertaking at any time. An old manuscript copy of the *Vaijayanta-tantra* came into the hands of the present writer from a person who did not know its value or contents. It was offered to be sold for a petty sum and the transaction was readily brought to a conclusion. The manuscript consists of 144 leaves of writing on both sides. A detailed examination revealed that it is an incomplete document, with several leaves missing in the middle and at the end. In the course of time, it was possible to obtain several other manuscripts, mostly incomplete and with leaves missing in various places. Collation of all these texts made it possible for the writer to bring forth a complete document, which is now in the final process of being edited. In this article it is proposed to place before the interested students, the nature and scope of the contents of this work, which has hitherto remained forgotten and in obscurity.

¹ A. K. COOMARASWAMY, *Medieval Sinhalese Art*, (2nd Edition), New York, 1956, p. 209.