

## Inanimate Plural Suffix -val in Sinhalese

THE origin of this plural suffix *-val* which is never met with until the end of the 10th century A.D. and found even after that date extremely rarely in inscriptions, though so common in the modern language, is very obscure indeed, and it has provided a number of scholars with a fertile ground for speculation. Ed. Müller while seeing no objection on phonological grounds to its derivation from P. *vana-* (forest) as Childers suggested, doubted its possibility semantically, and incorrectly thought that the 10th century A.D. inscriptional form *var*, (which he wrongly derived from Sk. *vr̥ddhi-*, 'increase'), in *dā-var* and *gaman-var*, was its prototype. As an alternative to this, he further suggested a possibility of the Sinhalese people borrowing this suffix from Tamil plural suffix *-kal*, in their 'further increasing apathy . . . in every respect'.<sup>1</sup> Geiger assuming that it must mean something like 'mass', 'multitude', appears to be tempted first to accept Childers's suggestion of identifying it with "*val*, 'forest' = P. *vana*", only to abandon it immediately in favour of following Müller in tracing it to *var* in instances like *dā-var* and *gaman-var* which he incorrectly translates as 'days' and 'errands' respectively. Geiger unlike Ed. Müller derives this *var* from Sk. *vāra-*, 'multitude'.<sup>2</sup>

There are thus three suggestions made as to the origin of the pl. suffix *-val*, viz. (i) Sk. P. *vana-*, 'forest', (ii) *var* < Sk. *vāra-*, 'multitude' and (iii) Tamil pl. suffix *-kaḷ / -gaḷ*.

(i) There is a Sinh. word *val* meaning (adj.) 'wild', 'savage', 'beastly', 'wicked'; (substantive) 'forest', 'jungle', 'thicket', 'underwood', etc., apart from the pl. suffix *-val*. Thus in the inscriptional instance, *val-val-ā*, 'in the forests',<sup>3</sup> the first *val-* (subst.) means 'forest' and the second *-val-* is the inanimate pl. suffix. And *val* in the adjectival sense is found in such modern expressions as *val aliyā*, 'wild elephant', *val satā*, 'wild animal', *val mrgayā*, 'wild beast', 'beastly creature', 'wicked fellow'. The derivation of this word *val* from Sk. P. *vana-*<sup>4</sup> and its identification with the pl. suffix *-val*<sup>5</sup> are highly doubtful. In spite of Childers, Müller and Geiger there are phonological objections to its derivation from Sk. P. *vana-*, according to Geiger's

own phonological laws. For, as he correctly states the original 'bisyllabic stems  $\cup\cup$  (i.e., consisting of two short syllables) remain bisyllabic' in Sinhalese,<sup>6</sup> and hence it is doubtful that *vana-* consisting of two short syllables could be reduced to a single syllable *val*. Secondly, the implied change of *-n- > -l* in Sinhalese at that time appears to be very doubtful, although Geiger thought so, on the seeming evidence of two or three questionable examples. Besides *val*, only examples he mentions in support of his contention are *palañ-dinu*, 'to put on (an ornament)' (P. *pilandhati*, Sk. *pi + √ nah-*) and *asal*, 'near' which he derives from Sk. P. *āsanna-* through *asan*.<sup>7</sup> The change of *-n- > -l* in *palañdinu* is obviously pre-Sinhalese, because it is already found in P. *pilandhana-*. The other example *asal* according to Helmer Smith is derived from Tamil *acal*, 'vicinity', 'neighbourhood', and not from Sk. P. *āsanna-*.<sup>8</sup> Hence both the examples given besides *val* to prove the change of *-n- > -l* are very unsatisfactory. As a matter of fact the inherited form of Sk. P. *vana-* (from which Geiger derives *val*) is found in Sinhalese as *vana* in the disyllabic form. Cf. also Sk. P. *jana- > dana*, 'people'; Sk. *stana-*, P. *thana- > tana*, 'breast'.

In my opinion Sinh. *val* (wild, jungle) < Mid. Ind. *vāla-* (cf. P. *vāla-*) < Sk. *vyāla-* (adj.) 'wicked'; 'vicious'; (subs.) 'beast of prey'; 'vicious elephant'; 'snake'; 'lion'; 'tiger'; 'hunting leopard'.<sup>9</sup> Though in Sanskrit it does not mean exactly 'forest', it is possible to see how this semantic development could have easily taken place from the meanings given to it in Sanskrit. In all the above meanings given to Sk. *vyāla-*, there is the association of forest in its vicious aspect as constituting danger and terror to man. In this semantic development we seem to have an instance similar to that of metonymy. For, a common name for a number of wild beasts which are an attribute of the forest appears to be substituted for the 'forest' itself. Sinh. noun *val* thus appears to have first meant 'forest' or 'jungle' with association of ideas hostile to man, rather than just a multitudinous growth of trees, and later extended to mean 'jungle' in general, as well as 'thicket', 'underwood', 'tangled growth of vegetation', etc. This view is supported by the meanings given to this word when it is employed as adj., e.g., 'wild', 'savage', 'wicked', 'beastly', etc.

There is no evidence to support the conjectured identification of this Sinh. word *val* with the pl. suffix *-val* which Müller rejected and Geiger aban-

1. Edward Müller: *Ancient Inscriptions of Ceylon*, London, 1883, pp. 9-10.  
 2. W. Geiger: *A Grammar of the Sinhalese Language*, Colombo, 1938, § III. *An Etymological Glossary of the Sinhalese Language*, Colombo, 1941, § 2352.  
 3. *Epigraphia Zeylanica (E.Z.)* III, p. 77, C 33.  
 4. Edward Müller: op. cit., p. 9.  
 W. Geiger: *A Grammar of the Sinhalese Language*, Colombo, 1938, § 60, 1.  
 5. W. Geiger: *ibid.*, § III.

6. W. Geiger: *ibid.*, § 29.  
 D. J. Wijayaratne: *Morphology of the Noun in Sinhalese Inscriptions up to the Tenth Century A.D.*, London University, Ph.D. thesis, 1950, § 6a.  
 7. W. Geiger: *A Grammar of the Sinhalese Language*, Colombo, 1938, § 60, 1.  
 8. Helmer Smith: *Wilhelm Geiger et le vocabulaire du singalais classique*, *Journal Asiatique*, 1950, Fascicule 2, § 1, p. 180.  
 9. Monier-Williams: *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, vide *vyāla*.

done in preference to tracing it to the 10th century A.D. *-var*. For, there does not seem to be any plausible reason why *val* meaning 'jungle', 'underwood', 'thicket', etc. should be used with the inanimate noun at this time as a pl. morpheme.

(ii) The second derivation of this suffix *-val* is really still worse and cannot be accepted for the following three reasons: First, following Müller, Geiger has misunderstood the meaning of *-var* in the quoted instances. This *-var* occurs not only in *dā-var* (in the text it is *tun-dā-var*) and *gaman-var*, but also in expressions like *mal-var*, 'flower-turn',<sup>10</sup> *kiri-var*, 'milk-turn', *tel-var*, 'oil-turn',<sup>11</sup> etc. Professor Wickramasinghe explains the significance of *var* as 'service by turn', deriving it from Sk. *vāra-*, 'turn'.<sup>12</sup> Dr. Paranavitana too has the same view.<sup>13</sup> This sense seems to fit in with all the relevant occurrences according to the context. The two instances that Müller and Geiger refer to occur in the following: *tun-dā-var mut pohomagul āy sesu-var no gatā yutu*, excepting the three days 'service by turn' no other 'service by turn' such as that at the uposatha festival shall be exacted;<sup>14</sup> *gaman-var giya salayah-haṭ*, to a servant who goes on errands.<sup>15</sup> In the above rendering Professor Wickramasinghe has abbreviated the sense of *gaman-var* which should have been strictly rendered as 'errand-service by turn'. It is impossible to regard *-var* in *tel-var* *kiri-var* as pl. suffix, as *tel*, 'oil' and *kiri*, 'milk' cannot have plural. Secondly, apart from their mistaking the sense of this word, Müller and Geiger are historically inaccurate when they say that *-var* is earlier than *-val*. For *-dā-var* and *gaman-var*, quoted by them, occur in the Tablets of Mahinda IV (1015-1031) where as pl. suffix *-val-* in *val-val-ā*, 'in the forests', occurs in the Badulla Pillar Inscription<sup>16</sup> of the reign of Udaya III (1003-1011) who reigned earlier than Mahinda IV. The third objection is on the grounds of phonology. For, as far as I know, there is no evidence anywhere that *-r* > *-l* in Sinhalese about this time. As a matter of fact there is abundant evidence to show that Sk. *-r* remained *-r* in Sinhalese. But only in a very few rare instances like *kuluṇu*, 'compassionate', 'compassion' (AMg. *kaluṇa-*, Sk. *karuṇa-*) Sk. *-r* is represented as *-l*, owing to the influence of Eastern Prākṛits such as Ardha Māgadhī.<sup>17</sup> In such words the change of *-r* to *-l* appears to be pre-Sinhalese.

10. *E.Z.* I, p. 96, 35.

11. *E.Z.* III, p. 104, C 5-6.

12. *E.Z.* I, p. 105, fn. 3.

13. *E.Z.* III, p. 112; *ibid.*, IV, p. 191, fn. 2.

14. *E.Z.* I, p. 93, 44.

15. *E.Z.* I, p. 95, 24.

16. *E.Z.* III, p. 77, C 33.

17. P. B. F. Wijeratne: *Phonology of the Sinhalese Inscriptions up to the End of the Tenth Century A.D.*, London University, Ph.D. thesis, 1944, § 45, 3.

(iii) The third suggestion that the pl. suffix *-val* is a loan from Tamil pl. suffix *-kaḷ / -gaḷ* is also not free from doubts and difficulties. It is true that there is a remarkable resemblance of this scheme of pl. inflexion to that in Dravidian. Caldwell observes 'They (i.e., pl. suffixes) are added directly to the crude base of the noun and are the same in each of the Obl. cases as in the Nom. The signs of case are the same in the plural as in the singular, the only real difference being that in the singular they are suffixed to the crude noun itself'.<sup>18</sup> This observation will equally well describe the same phenomenon in modern Sinh. inanimate nouns of the type, *raṭa*, 'country'. The resemblance of this mode in Sinh. to that in Tamil is brought home strikingly in the comparison of the following typical examples:

Sinh. <i>ge-</i> , 'house'		Tamil <i>manei-</i> , 'house'	
sg.		pl.	
Sinh.	Tamil	Sinh.	Tamil
Nom. <i>gē</i> , <i>ge-y-a</i> ;	<i>manei</i>	<i>ge-val</i> ;	<i>manei-gaḷ</i>
Acc. <i>gē</i> , <i>ge-y-a</i> ;	<i>maei-y-ei</i>	<i>ge-val</i> ;	<i>manei-gaḷ-ei</i>
Inst. <i>ge-y-in</i> , <i>ge-n</i> ;	<i>manei-y-āl</i>	<i>ge-val-in</i>	<i>manei-gaḷ-āl</i>
Dat. <i>ge-ṭa</i>	<i>manei-y-ikku</i>	<i>ge-val-aṭa</i>	<i>manei-gaḷ-ikku</i>
etc., etc.			

In spite of the striking resemblance in the method of employment of the two pl. suffixes, Sinh. *-val* and Tamil *-kaḷ / -gaḷ*, there are difficulties in identifying the first as a loan from the second. Dr. Paranavitana objects to this identification on orthographical grounds saying that *-l* in the Sinh. suffix is dental and in the Tamil it is cerebral *-ḷ*.<sup>19</sup> If this is the only objection it is not a very serious one, considering the fact that there is no evidence that the words borrowed from Tamil or other Dravidian sources were treated in Sinh. orthography with such fine accuracy. In fact, the evidence is really to the contrary. There are instances of words borrowed from Dravidian sources which have been very loosely treated in inscriptional orthography as well as in later Sinh. orthography, particularly when they contained sounds unfamiliar to the Sinhalese. Further more, this is admitted by Dr. Paranavitana himself when he says elsewhere in connection with the treatment of Tamil cerebral *ḷ* as a Sinh. dental *l*: 'This irregularity in spelling is a marked feature in words of Tamil origin'.<sup>20</sup> Note the treatment of Tamil *ḷ* in *ulvāḍu*<sup>21</sup> and *ulvāḍu*<sup>22</sup>

18. R. Caldwell: *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages*, London, 1875, p. 131.

19. *E.Z.* III, p. 97.

20. *E.Z.* III, p. 144.

21. *E.Z.* III, p. 139, C 8.

22. *E.Z.* III, p. 76, B 42.

< Tamil *ulpāḍan*, 'a temple official entrusted with temple funds, etc.'<sup>23</sup> Tamil *pulli*, 'spot' is written in mod. Sinh. as *pulli*. There is no difference between *ḷ* and *l* in pronunciation in Sinh. and the distinction maintained in orthography is only an artificial convention of scholars not supported by any distinction in pronunciation. In such circumstances it is not surprising if Tamil cerebral *-ḷ* were represented in Sinh. orthography as dental *-l*.

As far as I can see, the real phonological difficulty of the identification of T. *-kaḷ / -gaḷ* with the Sinh. suffix *-val* lies in the presumed change of *-ka-* / *-ga-* to *-va-* in its position. For, to my knowledge, there is no definite evidence that *-ka-* / *-ga-* in that position following a consonant (in consonantal stems) or any vowel except *a* (rarely), *i* (rarely) and *u* ever became *-va-* elsewhere. I, therefore, find it very difficult to connect the Sinh. suffix *-val* with the T. suffix *-kaḷ / -gaḷ*, on phonological grounds. Apart from this, it should be borne in mind that morphemes are not borrowed from other languages unless they are found in a large number of loan words from those languages. Cf. the process by which suffixes like *-age*, *-ess* were established in English words, e.g., *espionage*, *garage*, *cellarage*, *bondage*, *breakage*; *countess*, *poetess*, *goddess*, through the analogy of loans from French containing these suffixes. I know of no other language which has borrowed morphemes alone from a foreign language, apart from their being introduced through the analogy of loan-words containing those morphemes. It is possible, however, that there is a functional loan from Dravidian in the formation of this sort of pl. in the Sinh. inanimate nouns. For this mode of forming the plural by a special suffix is not Aryan, but has remarkable affinity with Dravidian as can be seen in the illustrations given above.

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23. *E.Z.* III, pp. 94-95; 144.