

## The use of the 'Inanimate' Noun with 'Animate' Significance in Sinhalese Inscriptions

THESE appear to be a few instances in Sinhalese inscriptions of the 10th c., A.D., wherein certain nouns apparently indicating inanimate objects are employed sometimes in their normal 'inanimate' sense and at other times in an 'animate' sense with reference to some individuals. In the following, I propose to examine some instances of this peculiar phenomenon.

(i) *tudī* and *soḷi* : Dr. Paranavitana<sup>1</sup> discussing these two words points out that Dr. Wickremasinghe has left them untranslated, while Mr. Bell interpreted them to mean Tonḍiyans and Cholians. Examining a number of instances in which these words occur, he rightly concludes that they mean particular kinds of drums. The first word appears to be a loan word from Tamil *tudī* (= T. *uḍukkai*, Sinh. *uḍḍkki*, a small drum tapering from each end forming a small neck in the middle) which occurs in Tamil literature of the early Christian era [vide *Silappadikāram*, Canto VI, l. 51]. The etymology of the second word is not certain ; however, that too may perhaps be a word of Dravidian origin. In the following instances *tudī* and *soḷi* appear to have been employed in the sense of two kinds of drums.

(a) *tudīyā soḷiyā gasā no vadnā koṭ isā*,<sup>2</sup> 'and not to enter by beating on *tudī* and *soḷi* (drums) '.

(b) *tudī soḷi no gasanu isā*,<sup>3</sup> 'and not to beat *tudī* and *soḷi* (drums) '.

(c) *tudī soḷi ber*,<sup>4</sup> 'drums, *tudī* and *soḷi* '.

(d) *soḷi bera tudī gattan no vadnā isā*,<sup>5</sup> 'and those bearing *soḷi* drums and *tudī*, not to enter '.

But in the following instances these words *tudī* and *soḷi* and also *nālā* (flutes) are used not as inanimate objects, but with a personal significance, referring to the individuals who play the instruments :

(e) *tudī soḷi no vadnā isā*,<sup>6</sup> 'and *tudī* and *soḷi* (i.e. those bearing *tudī* and *soḷi* drums), not to enter '.

(f) *tudī nālā rajkol-kāmiyan no vadnā koṭ*,<sup>7</sup> '*tudī* and *nālā* (bearing) servants of the royal household, not to enter '.

1. *Epigraphia Zeylanica* (E.Z.) III, pp. 146-148.
2. E.Z. IV, p. 189, C 3-6.
3. E.Z. III, p. 147.
4. *ibid.*
5. *ibid.*
6. E.Z. III, p. 140.
7. E.Z. II, p. 214, l. 44.

It is a noteworthy fact that the inflexion of *tuḍi* and *soḷi*, when they mean persons, remains the same as when they are employed as 'inanimate' substantives. Dr. Paranavitana<sup>8</sup> thinks that *tuḍi* and *soḷi* in the above (e) are to be considered as derivatives formed without any change in the form of the noun and hence to be translated as 'bearers of *tuḍi* and *soḷi* drums'. I am not aware of any such formation of secondary (*taddhita*) derivatives, without the addition of a secondary derivative suffix, given by any grammarian; nor have I ever come across elsewhere such secondary derivatives. Further, if they are secondary derivatives meaning persons connected with those instruments, as Dr. Paranavitana thinks, it is not very likely that they would be employed in the zero-inflexional-form (normal for the 'inanimate' substantive) for the Oblique plural of the 'animate' agent in the above (e), but in an 'animate' Oblique plural form like *\*tuḍiyan*, *\*soḷiyan* which will distinguish them from the inanimate objects denoted by the 'inanimate' plural forms, *tuḍi*, *soḷi*. It is more natural, in my opinion, to regard *tuḍi soḷi* in the above (e) as abbreviation for the phrase *tuḍi soḷi gattan* (those bearing *tuḍi* and *soḷi*), and *tuḍi nālā rajkol-kāmiyan* as abbreviation for *tuḍi nālā gat rajkol-kāmiyan* (servants of the royal household bearing *tuḍi* and *nālā*); cf. *soḷi bera tuḍi gattan* in the above (d). If they do not, somehow, represent such abbreviated speech, they may be regarded as instances of the figure of speech known as metonymy in which a person or thing may be indicated by a prominent accompaniment for the sake of picturesqueness or dignity.

(ii) *suvar mahavar*: The exact etymology and meaning of the two terms *suvar* and *mahavar* are still uncertain. Dr. Wickremasinghe<sup>9</sup> translates them as 'goldsmiths' and 'chief artisans' respectively, and suggests in a foot-note the following various possibilities of etymology and meaning of these words: *suvar* = Sk. *suvarṇa-kāra-* (goldsmith); *mahavar* = Sk. *mahā-kāra-*? which is rendered as 'chief artisan' on the basis that Sinh. *maha-āduru* (= Sk. *mahā-ācārya-*) is a title applied to a master-carpenter. Alternatively, *suvar* = Sk. *sūpakāra-*, 'cook' or Sk. *sūtrakāra-*, 'weaver'; *mahavar* = Sk. *matsyā-kāra-*, P. *muccha-kāra-*, 'fisher' or 'fish-monger' or Sk. *māṃsa-kāra-*, 'butcher'. But, as Dr. Paranavitana<sup>10</sup> points out, the context in which they occur shows that they may indicate some kinds of imposts remitted in the case of lands to which the immunities were granted. Dr. Paranavitana conjectures that *-var* in *suvar* and *mahavar* is derived from Sk. *vāra-*, 'turn' and may denote in a secondary sense the forced labour which was exacted from the peasants. Hence, he thinks, *mahavar* (< *\*mahāvāra-*) means 'principal turn of service' and *suvar*, 'the secondary turn of service', taking the latter to be a contraction of *\*suḷuvar* as opposed to *mahavar*. This derivation and the rendering appear

8. E.Z. III, p. 148.

9. E.Z. I, p. 171.

10. E.Z. IV, p. 191, fn. 2.

to be rather forced and far-fetched, and quite apart from the fact that there is no evidence to show the existence of *\*suḷuvar*, a contraction of *\*suḷuvar* into *suvar* is not possible according to the laws of phonology, as *ḷ* is one of those stable consonants which never disappear in Sinh. phonology.<sup>11</sup>

It may be possible, in my opinion, to trace the terms *suvar* and *mahavar* to Sk. *sukara-*, 'charity', 'benevolence', and Sk. *mahākāra-*, 'a large revenue' or 'rent' or 'tax' respectively. The use of euphemistic term 'benevolence' is well known in English history as a device, employed by certain English kings to hide the odious nature of a certain levy, they made on their subjects, as this levy was made out to be a 'benevolence' or a 'loving gift' made to the king. Hence, if the example in English history may be taken as a parallel, *suvar* (< *sukara-*) may indicate a forced levy of such a nature, besides the alternative possibility that it meant a tax, collected for public charities. The term *mahavar*, 'large tax' in our records probably meant a land tax.

Whatever be the exact derivation of these words, the question that concerns us here is their use in their contexts in the inscriptions, sometimes as 'inanimate' words indicating some kinds of imposts and at other times as 'animate' nouns indicating some persons who were probably connected with the levying of the imposts, e.g., in *pu(da) sut-vat suvar mahavar no gannā koṭ isā*,<sup>12</sup> 'and not to levy gifts, tolls, "charity-tax" (or "benevolence", *suvar*) and large tax (*mahavar*)', the words in question are used in an 'inanimate' sense. On the contrary, in the clause, . . . *suvar mahavar radkol-kāmiyan no vadnā koṭ*,<sup>13</sup> '*suvar* (collectors), *mahavar* (collectors) (and other) employees of the royal household, not to enter',<sup>14</sup> they appear to refer to some persons probably connected with the levying of those imposts, and as such they are used with personal 'animate' signification. If the above rendering is correct, we notice that the zero-inflexion remains the same in both the applications of these words.

(iii) *deruvanā* (or *°nā*) *dekamtān*: These two words of obscure origin and sense, perhaps, mean two treasuries and two departments (?) as suggested by Dr. Paranavitana.<sup>15</sup> Whatever be the actual sense, it is clear that these words were used first, in the sense of an institution or office, with 'inanimate' signification, and later, also in a personal 'animate' sense to indicate a class of officials connected with these institutions, e.g.,

(a) *deruvanā dekamtān vāssan no vad . . .*,<sup>16</sup>

11. W. Geiger: *A Grammar of the Sinhalese Language*, Colombo, 1938, §§ 44.1:48; 50; 51; 52.

12. E.Z. IV, p. 189, C 1-3.

13. E.Z. I, p. 169, p. 174.

14. This may also be rendered as 'servants of the royal-household, *suvar* (and) *mahavar*, not to enter'.

15. E.Z. III, pp. 143-144.

16. E.Z. IV, p. 251.

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(b) (*deruvanā dekamtān*) *vāssan no vadnā koṭ isā*,<sup>17</sup> 'and occupants (or employees) of *deruvanā* and *dekamtān*, not to enter'.

(c) *deruvanā dekamtān vāssan vādā ākul no karanu isā*,<sup>18</sup> 'and employees (lit. occupants) of *deruvanā* and *dekamtān*, not to enter and cause confusion'.

In the above instances, the words in question have definitely an 'inanimate' significance, as they appear to indicate some institutions in their context.

In the following instances, however, these two words in their context clearly refer to some persons who were connected with the institutions of *deruvanā* and *dekamtān*, and as such may be said to have an 'animate' significance.

(d) *deruvanā dekamtān no vadnā koṭ isā*,<sup>19</sup>

(e) *dekamtān deruvenā no vadnā koṭ isā*,<sup>20</sup> 'and *deruvenā* and *dekamtān* (i.e. the employees of *deruvanā* and *dekamtān*), not to enter'.

Again it should be noticed that no 'animate' inflexion is added to these nouns, when they are employed to refer to persons.

(iv) *maṅg-div piya-div* : Other variants of this phrase that occur are the following :

*maṅgdiva piyadiva*,<sup>21</sup> *maṅgdiva pediva*,<sup>22</sup> *maṅgdiv pediv*,<sup>23</sup> *maṅgdivā [pedivā]*,<sup>24</sup> *maṅgiva piyaṅgiva*,<sup>25</sup> *maṅgiva (pegi)va*,<sup>26</sup> *maṅgiva piyagiva*,<sup>27</sup> *magiv (pigiv)*,<sup>28</sup> *magiva pegiva*.<sup>29</sup>

This pair of words occurring frequently in so many variants in the grants of immunities in the 10th c., A.D. is also of obscure origin and meaning. Dr. Wickremasinghe deriving them from Sk. \**mārga-jīva-* and \**pāda-jīva-* translates them as 'those who live by highway robbery' and 'those who live by vagrant habits'<sup>30</sup> respectively, and elsewhere, as 'tramps' and 'vagrants'.<sup>31</sup> Dr. Paranavitana,<sup>32</sup> however, points out that 'in a pillar inscription from Mihintale'<sup>33</sup> the phrase *maṅgdiv pediv no vadnā isā* is followed by *sesu radkol-kāmiyan*

*no vadnā isā*' (not to be entered by other royal officers), proving that *maṅgdiv pediv* in that record were meant to be some category of royal officers. Thus, in all the instances where these two words and their variants occur along with the verbal phrase *no vadnā koṭ isā*, there is no doubt that they were employed with personal 'animate' signification, meaning some royal officers. But this seems to be due to a secondary application of originally 'inanimate' words. For they appear to be employed in the original 'inanimate' sense in the instance, *maṅgdiv pediv no gannā koṭ isā*,<sup>34</sup> 'not to levy *maṅgdiv pediv*', where they refer to a certain kind of levy. But in the two instances, *maṅgdiva piyadiva sorun kothā van no gannā koṭ isā*,<sup>35</sup> and *maṅgdiv piyadiv sorun koṭā van no gannā koṭ isā*,<sup>36</sup> they may be rendered either in the 'inanimate' sense as 'and not to take *maṅgdiva piyadiva* (imposts) thieves and murderers' or in the 'animate' sense of royal officers as 'and thieves and murderers not to be arrested by *maṅgdiva* and *piyadiva* officers'. Syntactically both these renderings are possible. But the latter rendering is possible only if these officers were charged with the arrest of criminals like thieves and murderers. As they are more likely to be officers connected with the levying of imposts *maṅgdiv* and *piyadiv*,<sup>37</sup> it may be preferable to take the occurrence in these two records also in the 'inanimate' sense of imposts.

In the above examples (i), (ii), (iii) and (vi), the presence of inflexions typical of the inanimate is maintained even when they are used to denote animate beings. This fact shows beyond any doubt that they were primarily 'inanimate' words, but were employed secondarily to refer to the persons connected with those institutions. Such an extension in the use of 'inanimate' nouns constituting attributes or prominent accompaniments to refer to persons connected with them, for the sake of picturesqueness or dignity, may be regarded as a case of metonymy. And it is not peculiar to Sinhalese alone, as can be seen, for instance, in the use of the word 'crown' in English to denote the king, as well as the inanimate object worn by the monarch on his head.

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17. E.Z. III, p. 299.

18. E.Z. I, p. 33, l. 25.

19. E.Z. II, p. 24, C 11-14.

20. E.Z. I, p. 174, A 15-17; p. 168, B 22-26.

21. E.Z. I, p. 174, B 13-14.

22. E.Z. II, p. 4, C 2-3.

23. E.Z. I, p. 205, C 18-19.

24. E.Z. III, p. 299, C 9-10.

25. E.Z. II, p. 12, B 18-20.

26. E.Z. II, p. 18, B 20-21.

27. E.Z. II, p. 24, C 8-9.

28. E.Z. II, p. 47, B 27.

29. E.Z. III, p. 139, C 18-19.

30. E.Z. I, p. 171, fnn. 1, 2.

31. E.Z. II, p. 5.

32. E.Z. III, p. 146.

33. *Ancient Inscriptions of Ceylon*, London, 1883, No. 115.

34. E.Z. I, p. 205, C 18-21.

35. E.Z. I, p. 174, B 13-17.

36. E.Z. I, p. 169, C 17-24.

37. See the above 34.