A Note on Syllable-Quantity in Sinhalese metre

මතෙක් ලුහු ගුරු වේ — දෙ මත් දිගු හා පසු හල්. Matek luhu guru vē – de mat digu hā pasu hal.

A light syllable is one mātrā. A heavy syllable, namely, a long vowel or a vowel and consonant, is two matras.¹

This aphorism on syllable-quantity comes in the second verse of the Sandas Lakuna (13th century A.D.), the earliest extant, but nonetheless current, treatise on Sinhalese metrics. This statement provides a twoterm system of quantity which may be stated as follows by generalizing the syllable in terms of C and V² and using the macron to indicate vowel length :

light (luhu) syllables :	V,	CV	=one mātrā.
heavy (guru) syllables :	V,	CVΓ	
	VC,	cvc }	=two mātrās.
	ν̄c,	cvc J	

In this note I propose to make a few observations on this concept.³

The statement of luhu and guru syllables in Sinhalese is identical with the statement of laghu and guru in Sanskrit. In Sanskrit, a laghu syllable (V, CV) is one matra and a guru syllable (\overline{V} , $C\overline{V}$, VC, CVC, $\overline{V}C$, $C\overline{V}C$ is two mātrās.4

So far as Sanskrit poetry⁵ is concerned, this system is applicable without any lapses. Where a laghu syllable is prescribed by metrics, one may have V or CV. Where a guru syllable is prescribed, one may have \overline{V} , $C\overline{V}$,

^{1.} The mention of only the vowel and the final consonant shows that the initial consonant, if any, is immaterial for the matra structure of the syllable.

C = consonant; V = vowel.
 Quantity, which is a two-term system, is different from length. Length is said to be a threeterm system, harasva (short), dirgha (long) and pluta (extra long). But pluta, they say, cannot be written. It is only the prolongation of a vocalic sound.
4. See also W. S. Allen, Phonetics in Ancient India, pp. 83 ff.
5. See A. A. Macdonell, a Sanskrit Grammar for Students, pp. 234-5.

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VC, CVC, VC or CVC. In Sinhalese poetry, however, this is not applicable in the same way. For non-Sanskritic metres, I find it necessary to recognize a three-term system as follows :

V,	CV		-	one mātrā.
VC,	CVC	٦		two mātrās
V,	$C\overline{V}$	J		two mailas.
ν̄C,	CVC		=	three mātrās.

Before stating the data for the recognition of a three-term system of syllable quantity for Sinhalese, I propose to illustrate the adequacy of the two-term system of syllable quantity in Sanskrit by giving below a Sanskrit verse and generalizing its syllables in terms of, C, V and macron. The verse chosen is composed in the 'mandakranta' metre which needs four lines of the following pattern :

 $- - - - - - - - - - - - - (27 \text{ mātrās})^6$

There are 17 syllables in a line of which 10 (1-4, 10-11, 13-14, 16-17) are long. The verse chosen is :

ye⁷ samrambhotpatanarabhasāh svāngabhangāya tasmim muktādhvānam sapadi sarabhā langhayeyurbhavantam tānkurvīthās tumulakarakāvrstipātāvakīrņān ke vā na syuh paribhavapadam nisphalārambhayatnāh. (Meghadūtam. 1,57).

The heavy syllables are underlined. Each line has ten heavy syllables and seven light syllables in the prescribed sequence. The syllable structures in these lines are given below in terms of \tilde{C} V and macron paying special attention to the heavy syllables.

10 11 12 13 14 15 5 — 9 3 2

6. Macron (—) = guru (heavy) syllable. Micron (\sim) = laghu (light) syllable. In the Saňdas lakuna however, the prescribed notation is the opposite. It recommends that heavy syllables must be marked with the micron and light syllables with the macron.

' guru vak kotin aňdanē—luhu idu aňdu äňdamē '

ගුරු වක් කොටින් අඳනේ ලුහු ඉදු අඳු ඇඳමේ

7. In Sk. c and o are long vowels.

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These syllable structures show that where a heavy syllable is prescribed, any of the three, CV, CVC and $C\overline{V}C$ (or, for that matter, V, VC and $\overline{V}C$) can occur without any restriction. The light syllables are CV (or, for that matter, V) in structure.

The concept of luhu and guru syllables in Sinhalese is a borrowing from Sanskrit, and can be applied in the Sanskritic metres in Sinhalese in the same way as in Sanskrit. This two-term system is, however, insufficient to analyse the non-Sanskritic metres. For them it is necessary that a three-term system of matra structure should be recognized, as :

V, CV	:	one mātrā.
∇, C∇, VC, CVC	:	two mātrās.
∇C, C∇C	:	three mātrās.

In order to illustrate this point I give below four first lines of certain four-line verses⁸ of the matra pattern 9-11-9-14⁹. These lines, then must contain 9 mātrās each¹⁰.

(1)	දඹදිව් තල පතර	dambadiv tala patara
2)	එතුවක් සිට දුහද	etuvak sita duhada
(3)	යේසුස් කිරිස්තු	yēsus kiristū
(4)	යෙබළිදු කාන්ගර	sebalindu kāngara.

To scan them :

= 9
= 9
 = 9
= 9

The structures of syllables denoted by -- are as follows :

	==	CVC
	=	CVC
		CV, CVC, CVC, CV respectively.
—	=	CVC.

8. Kustantinu hatana, vv 9-12.

9. In many Sinhalese metres the number of syllables in a line is not prescribed by the metric rules ; only the number of matras in a line is prescribed. Therefore, the number of syllables is immatcrial so long as the number of matras is correctly preserved. This particular metre is one of them. 10. See Kustantinu hatana, ed. S. G. Perera and M. E. Fernando. 1933 pp. 42 ff.

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In counting the mātrā structure by alletting one mātrā to each light (\frown) syllable we find that—

in (1) the light syllables count 7, and therefore CVC=2.

in (2) the light syllables count 7, and therefore CVC=2.

in (3) the light syllable counts 1, the two CVC syllables count, as shown in (1) and (2), 4; therefore the two CV syllables = 4, whence CV = 2, in (4) the light syllables count 6, and therefore $C\overline{V}C = 3$.

This observation indicates that a three-term system of mātrā structure should be recognized for non-Sanskritic metres in Sinhalese as-

(C) V		1 mātrā.
(C) $\overline{\mathbf{V}}$, (C) VC	==	2 mātrās.
(C) $\overline{V}C$	=	3 mātrās.

On this basis a three-term system of syllable quantity may be set up for analysing Sinhalese as light, medium and heavy, whereby the phonetic distinction of length between such pairs as pan, pān; gat, gāt; mas, mās; etc., can be phonologically stated in terms of the category of quantity.

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