Some Notes on Geiger’s Grammar of the Sinhalese Language

WILHELM Geiger’s Grammar of the Sinhalese Language was a unique contribution to the linguistic studies of the Sinhalese language, in particular, and to linguistics in general. It is but natural that a pioneer work such as Geiger’s should leave room for a great deal of further research. The following are a few observations on some of his findings.

I. While discussing the inflexion of nouns which denote inanimate objects (§ 107. 3) Geiger notes:

"The suffix of Singular Locative and Genitive is -ehi, also contracted to -ë. I do not believe that we are allowed to compare it with Pali -(a)mhi (< Sk. -smin in the pronominal inflexion). Prakrit has -(a)mni or -(a)mni, and in Sinhalese we should expect -am for -amhi. Cf. gim heat < gimha. It is, therefore, more probable that the locative of -as stems (Pk. P. Sk. manasi) was generalized in Sinhalese.” Thus, Geiger seems to think that the Locative ending -ehi of Sinhalese had no connection with the Old Indian pronominal ending -smin, for in that case, according to him, we should have had in Sinhalese an ending in -m-, and not in -h-, and that, therefore, -ehi of Sinhalese is a generalization of the Locative of Sanskrit -as stems. This view does not seem
wite tenable because Geiger takes into consideration only the possibility -smin developing into -mni and -mmi, and not its development, as Z. Wickremasinghe too has pointed out (Epigraphia Zeylanica I, p. 58), e.g. -msi (Pischel—Grammatik der Prakrit Sprachen, § 366 a), Ś. -ssim (ibid § 425, 426, 428, 430, 433), and Mg. -śsim (Pischel § 425, 426, 428), some of which would in the next stage develop into -si and subsequently to -hi as is noted frequently in Sinhalese Prakrit. The Locative ending -si occurs in the Asokan inscriptions at Kalsi, Dhauli and Jauagara, although it has not been noticed in any Sinhalese-Prakrit inscription published hitherto, Paranavitana (EpZ. IV, p. 126) refers to the existence of a Locative ending -si in certain Brāhmi inscriptions, which in subsequent times gave rise to -hi.

Now some explanation is necessary as to the initial -c of the ending -chi. Double endings are a common phenomenon in MI., e.g. M. -āo, Ś. -ādo, P. -ādo of the Ablative Singular < Sk. -āt + -taḥ (M. rukkāo, Ś. rukkādō, P. rukkātō from the tree = Sk. vrkṣāt); M. Ś. Amg. -chinto of Abl. Pl. < Vedic -ebhiḥ + -taḥ; and AmG. -esunto of the Abl. Pl. < Sk. -(e)ṣu + -taḥ (from among); etc. Even in Sinhalese we have double endings like -hata, -hita of the Dative Singular < P. -ssa + attham < Sk. -sya + artham; -anta, -anta of the Dat. Pl. < Sk. -ānām + artham; -angē of the Gen. Pl. < Sk. -ānām + Gen. postpositive -gē; etc. Thus it is quite probable that the -c of -chi was the old historical Loc. Sing. ending < P. Sk. -c, and that -chi was a double Loc. Sing. ending.

Another explanation that may be attempted for the -c- of -chi is that it was caused by Umlaut. The final -a of a nominal stem, when followed by -msi or -ssim or -śsim < -smin, could have developed an -e-, as the -a- would then be a heavy vowel followed by an -i. Vide Geiger § 12. 2.

An objection that may be raised to obtaining -chi by generalizing the case-ending of forms like menehi from Sk. stems in -as is that the Loc. Sing. -ehi occurs in Sinhalese-Prakrit in contexts much older, judging historically, than forms like menehi. There is strong reason to believe menehi itself is to be connected historically with MI. forms like manamsi, and not with OI. and MI. manasi.

In Sinhalese-Prakrit the commonest case-ending of the Loc. Sing. was G. viharahi at the monastery EpZ. III, 165; pavatahi on the rock AIC. 1, a; vibajakah at the division EpZ. I, 2113-4; vihirabijakah at ajaka ib. I, 622; ataragagahi in the Ataragaga (country) ib. III, 1542; karahi in the Sabbath hall ib. III, 1663; catara-dorahi at the four
In Proto-Sinhalese, the endings -hi, -e and -chi occur together with the ending -a which was a later development of the old ending -a e.g., NAKAREHATA (or of) the city EpZ. III, 250-5th c.; PAJINNA PASAHI in the Eastern quarter ib. ; VEHERAHI in the monastery ib. III, 2184-5th c.; MEHI (Loc. for Gen.) (lit. in) this ib. IV, 1453; GEHI in the house ib. IV, 1485; GAL-NAHII of (in) the stone-boat ib. IV, 1493; VAHERE in the monastery IV, 132-3, No. 3; ME EKA-SATARA-KARAVANE Vedā the interest on these one hundred kalavañas III, 250-5th c.; GALVEHĀ VEĐA in Galavehera IV, 1453.

When we come to mediaeval Sinhalese, we find, the old endings -hi, -e, and -chi still surviving, but -e fast disappearing; the -a which made its appearance towards the close of the Proto-Sinhalese period gaining in importance and becoming more frequent; and the old ending -chi undergoing further changes and becoming -eyi and ultimately -e.

Thus ratahi in the country Dhampiyā-Saharanā-Gātpadaya (DhAgP) 28631; veherahi in the monastery ib. 2323; kalekhi at a time ib. 2285; gehi in the house 2813; nāgama kathahi with regard to a woman Sikha-Vaññā-Valaiida-Vinisa (SkVn) p. 1. 8; bandhaya matta beyond a fathom in height ib. p. 8. 120; hamiyeki in the presence DhAgP 9334; no-īṭâdxmēhi in not coming into being ib. 3933; vihiyemhi in the relaxation ib. 8715 = P. vassage; ahviyēsā in the neighbourhood, in front SkVn p. 4. 62 = P. ahvāsē ; Sirūrā in the body DhAgp 16B56; tândh in the place ib. 1714; kalaveyī on the thigh ib. 24225; geyi in the house ib. 2283; kule in the family ib. 7133; eliyē on the threshold ib. 1003 = P. ummārē.

In discussing the Conditional Mood in Sinhalese, Geiger ad\n(§ 152, II) that its origin and character are rather obscure. He states, in an attempt to elucidate them, that the Conditional forms in Sinhalese have both the conditional and the temporal meanings, and that as the base of the Prakrit forms like balavot of the Conditional Mood is the stem of the preterite participle, the base of the present forms like balatot should also be the preterite participle. Arguing further, he concludes that if that is correct, then the whole construction of the so-called Conditional will become comparable with that of Locative Absolute. This is indeed a remarkable conclusion, although it has not been sufficiently substantiated. He does not show how balavot or balatot can be compared with the Locative Absolute, and how balatot can be looked upon as a present participle. What is more, the explanation he attempted for -hot, the older form of -ot, by breaking it up into lō meaning 'or' and t = da (mark of question) does not seem satisfactory.

3. See for a discussion by Paranavitana, EpZ. IV, p. 120.
like vadata-varā the best of sayers or exponents, Pṛhaspati, Siya-Ras-Laka 228 = Sk. vadatām-varah. As Geiger himself has noted, forms like bala and bāluvoṭ are mere developments of older forms like balata-hot and lālu hot.

III. While discussing Gerund I ending in -min (§ 156. 1), Geiger says

"This gerund in -min is the instrumental case of a verbal noun in -ma which is closely connected with the more modern formations in -ima, -uma: bālim bāluma." Besides this gerund in -min, the author of the Sidat-Saṅgarā mentions two others ending in -mina and -mini. Of them, -mina preserves in mediaeval Sinhalese and in a few other later works, probably for reasons of metre, rhythm, etc., is the same as -min, with the final vowel still preserved. The final -in of the ending -min has apparently led Geiger to think that this gerund has had its origin in the Instrumental case of a verbal noun in -ma.

Of the suffixes of the present participle, -nta, -māna and -mina (Pisch § 562) found in MI., -nta has given rise to a participle in -t, as was noted above.

-māna is found preserved in a few adjectival forms which were originally present participles. e.g., divaman and dimanu living, alive = P. jīvamāna; valman and valman existing, present = P. vattamāna, Sk. vartamāna; sikman training oneself, esp. with reference to a young woman undergoing a probationary course of training in order to become a nun = P. sikkhamāna, sobaman shining beautiful = P. sobhamāna. Sk. sobhamāna; vāḍaman growing, increasing in vāḍaman sēyehi with growing shade, as the shadows lengthen, when evening draws near = P. vaddhamāna|aka-cchāyāya, etc. -mina evidently gave rise to the present gerunds in -mina and -min. When there is a participle ending in -mina in MI., there is no necessity to resort to the nominal inflexion, for explaining another participle in -min in Sinhalese.

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