PĀLI AND THE LANGUAGE OF THE HERETICS

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1. Introduction

1.1. It has long been known that certain phonological and mor-
phological features occurring in Pāli do not conform to the usual
pattern of that language. In particular, the nominative singular
masculine and neuter endings -e and the vocative singular ending
-e have been assumed to be borrowings from Māgadhī, and are
often referred to as 'Māgadhisms',[1] although in fact the use of the
nominative singular ending -e is not confined to the Eastern
dialects.[2]

1.2. The editors of the Critical Pāli Dictionary analysed the use
of these forms in -e, and classified them as follows:[3]

  (a) dialect forms, borrowed from dialects where the nominative
singular was in -e, including in the case of the commentaries
borrowings from the ⟨Sīhala-⟩ Aṭṭhakathā (Proto-Sinhalese being
an e-dialect).[4]

  (b) heretic tenets.

  (c) proverbially, or as a characteristic of persons of base extract
or behaviour.

  (d) vocatives of feminine nicknames.

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[1] See W. Geiger, *Pāli Literatur und Sprache*, Strassburg 1916, § 80.

[2] J. Brough, *The Gāndhārī Dharmapada*, London 1962, § 76.

[3] See Volume I, p. 471, s.v. *avitakka²*.

[4] I think that I am correct in my belief that of all the examples quoted therein,
only the references to Mp I 71,13 ≠ II 273,16–17 are included in the suggested
borrowing from the ⟨Sīhala-⟩ Aṭṭhakathā.

1.3. Lüders, when collecting the forms in Pāli which he held to prove the existence of an Ur-kanon composed in a language other than Pāli, considered the problem again, but made no analysis, being content to include the -e ending under the general heading of 'Eastern forms'.[5]

1.4. Earlier, when considering the heretics' doctrines which are recorded in the Pāli canon (D I 53 ff., M I 517 ff.), Franke had made two suggestions about the Māgadhisms:[6]

(a) that they were deliberately introduced in order to make the speaker seem ludicrous.

(b) that they represented reminiscences of the language of the original teachers.

1.5. In his discussion of the doctrines of the Ājīvikas, Basham pointed out that the first of these two possibilities could scarcely be correct.[7] Although in the (later) Sanskrit drama the use of Māgadhī was reserved for lowly and humorous characters, there is no evidence that the widespread use of Ardha-Māgadhī (which also had the ending -e) by the Jains made a ludicrous impression upon the contemporary listener. Moreover, if such had been the intention, the -e termination would surely have been employed in the speeches of all six heretics, instead of being found only in those of Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita, and Pakudha, and not even consistently in these. The statements of the other three heretics contain no Māgadhisms.

1.6. Despite this, Bechert[8] returned to the idea that the -e forms were introductions into the text, made by those who wished to make the heretics' speech sound ridiculous because they felt that Pāli was an inappropriate language for the Buddha's opponents to speak. Bechert, however, differed from previous proposers of this theory in that he suggested that the changes were made in

[5] H. Lüders, *Beobachtungen über die Sprache des buddhistischen Urkanons*, Berlin 1954, §§ 1–24.

[6] R. O. Franke, *Dīgha Nikāya in Auswahl übersetzt*, Göttingen 1913, p. 56 n. 5.

[7] A. L. Basham, *History and doctrines of the Ājīvikas*, London 1951, p. 24.

[8] H. Bechert, "Über Singhalesisches im Pālikanon", *WZKS-uO* I (1957), pp. 71–5.

Ceylon, where as mentioned above (§ 1.2.) the Sinhalese Prakrit also had a nominative singular masculine and neuter ending -*e*. Bechert also regarded the genitive plural[9] forms -*kappuno* and *kammuno*, which occur in the heretics' speech, as supporting his argument, for he compared this ending with the Sinhalese oblique case ending -*un*, and pointed out that no mainland Prakrit had such an ending. As he has recently repeated his views[10] on the Sinhalese origin of these anomalous forms, it seems worthwhile considering once again these two questions:

(a) are the forms in -*e* borrowed from Māgadhī or from the Sinhalese Prakrit?

(b) are the genitive plural forms in -*uno* borrowed from Sinhalese or from some other source?

2. The nominative singular ending *e-*

2.1. If the -*e* forms have their origin in the Sinhalese Prakrit, then we have to consider whether they were introduced accidentally or on purpose. Against the idea of accidental introduction is the fact that the so-called Māgadhisms are few in number in the Pāli canon, and nothing like as common as would be expected if the scribes had a tendency to introduce forms from their own language into the texts they were transmitting. In the particular case we are discussing we should need to explain how it happened that the same accident was made by the transmitters of both the Dīgha-nikāya and the Majjhima-nikāya. The suggestion that one tradition was merely following the other can be ruled out because the words of what must originally have been the same statement are not identical in the two texts.[11]

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[9] Buddhaghosa glosses: *mahākappuno ti mahākappānaṃ* (*Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, p. 164,12). The same explanation is given in *Papañcasūdanī* III 232,11 although the lemma there is -*kappino* (v.l. -*kappuno*). There is no direct gloss on *kammuno* in either commentary.

[10] H. Bechert, "Notes on the formation of Buddhist sects and the origins of Mahāyāna", *German Scholars on India: contributions to Indian studies*, Varanasi 1973, Volume I, p. 11 ("... the existence of undoubtedly old Sinhalese-Prakrit forms in Pāli suttas. These forms were used to characterize the speech of heretical teachers as uneducated speech").

[11] Contrast *paṭhavī-kāyo āpo-kāyo tejo-kāyo vāyo-kāyo sukhe dukkhe jīva-sattame* (D I 56,25–26) with *paṭhavī-kāyo ... sukhe dukkhe jīve, satt' ime* (M I 517,23–24).

2.2. If the insertions were made on purpose, then we have to consider why they should have been made. The suggestion that they were made to make the heretics' speech seem ludicrous, or because Pāli was thought to be inappropriate for the Buddha's enemies, can be rejected on the same grounds as Franke's suggestion above (§ 1.5.):

(a) there is no evidence that the Sinhalese thought that their own language with its -e endings sounded ludicrous when compared with the canonical language with its -o endings, or was a suitable language for heretics to speak.

(b) the same changes should have been made in the speech of all the heretics.

2.3. As stated above (§ 1.5.), the -e forms are not found consistently in the heretics' speeches. Basham has analysed them in detail, and shown that not only are the different heretics treated differently, but the treatment of one and the same heretic is not consistent, e.g. in Pakudha's doctrine (D I 56), of seven elements mentioned, four have nominative singular endings in -o, while the last three have endings in -e, i.e. *paṭhavī-kāyo āpo-kāyo tejo-kāyo vāyo-kāyo sukhe dukkhe jīva-sattame*.[12]

2.4. The only possible explanation of this is, as Basham states, that the -o and -e material must have come from different sources.[13] Supporting evidence for this is found in the *Paṇhāvāgaraṇāiṃ*, to which Basham refers.[14] This is a late Jain canonical text, with the nominative singular ending in -o for the most part, as Sen states.[15] Nevertheless, in a section[16] which deals with the views of the upholders of certain false, i.e. non-Jain, philosophical doctrines, some forms in -e are found. As Sen says,[17] these look as though they are quotations from an older source. There are

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[12] Basham, *op. cit.*, pp. 24–25.

[13] *ibid.*, pp. 24–25.

[14] *ibid.*, p. 25.

[15] Amulyachandra Sen, *A critical introduction to the Paṇhāvāgaraṇāiṃ, the tenth Aṅga of the Jain canon*, Würzburg 1936, p. 13.

[16] *Paṇhāvāgaraṇāiṃ*, sutta 7 (= *Suttāgame*, ed. Phūlchandjī Mahārāj, Volume I, p. 1206).

[17] Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

in this section very close verbal similarities with some of the phrases found in the Pāli texts,[18] and it seems quite clear that the same doctrines are being quoted, although there are differences between them which justify Basham's statement that these and other similarities between the Buddhist and Jain texts are "garbled borrowings from a common source".[19] It is quite impossible for the -e forms to have been introduced into Paṇhāvāgaraṇāiṃ for purposes of ridicule, for the -e ending is the regular nominative singular ending of the Ardha-Māgadhī in which the older Jain canonical texts are written, and it would therefore have been respected by the Jains, not ridiculed.

2.5. We find, then, that the Buddhists refer to the heretics in passages where -e and -o forms are mixed together, and the Jains do likewise, although the passages which agree verbally happen not to agree precisely on the distribution of the -e and -o forms. It seems clear that both religions were basing their knowledge of the heretical sects upon (at least) two sources, of which one used -e forms and the other -o forms. Depending on which source they were following, their accounts of the heretics had sometimes -e forms and sometimes -o, although by chance they never agree exactly.

3. The genitive plural ending -uno

3.1. Barua thought[20] that the genitive plural form -kappuno was typical of the heretics' language. He assumed that it was a singular form used as a plural, and was the equivalent of Pāli kappassa. This is certainly the simplest solution to the problem, for such a development is not unknown elsewhere in Middle Indo-Aryan, e.g. the Eastern Apabhraṃśa genitive plural ending -aha is the extension of the singular ending to the plural.[21]

3.2. If this suggestion is accepted, then we should presumably have to take kappuno as a development of *kappano. The evolution

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[18] Basham, op. cit., p. 218.
[19] ibid., p. 219.
[20] ibid., pp. 219–20.
[21] G. V. Tagare, Historical Grammar of Apabhraṃśa, Poona 1948, § 86.

of a genitive singular form *kappano on the analogy of kammano
would not be surprising. After the loss of the final -n of the stem,
kamma was frequently treated as though it were an -a stem noun.
The existence of the alternative genitive forms kammano and
kammassa[22] could have led to a situation where kappassa and
*kappano could also exist side by side. There was also the ten-
dency in Sanskrit, which was continued in Middle Indo-Aryan,
for the extension of the use of forms from -n-stems. In Vedic
Sanskrit the genitive singular of an -i stem was -es for both
masculine and neuter. In Classical Sanskrit the ending was -es
for the masculine but -ino (taken over from the -in stem) for the
neuter. In Pāli any derivative of -es has disappeared completely,
and we find -ino even for the masculine nouns, e.g. aggino. By
analogy with the -a stem nouns, however, we also find aggissa.[23]
Similarly from the -u stem, where -n-forms are already found in
Vedic Sanskrit,[24] we find both bhikkhuno and bhikkhussa. The
existence of kappassa and *kappano would therefore not be un-
expected.

3.3. The existence in both Pāli[25] and Prakrit[26] of kammano and
kammuno, with the latter showing the development of -man- >
-mun- because of the labialisation of -a- > -u- after -m-, may have
led to kappuno existing together with *kappano, or kappuno may in
itself be an independent example of labialisation of -a- after -pp-.

3.4. On the other hand it is possible to regard kappuno as a
genuine genitive plural form. The Sanskrit genitive plural ending
-ānām already shows the influence of the -n- stem nouns, and it
would not be surprising if *kappanaṃ replaced kappānaṃ by
analogy with kammanaṃ. The development of -a- > -u- would
again be either on the analogy of kammunaṃ (which with the
spelling kammuṇaṃ is attested in Ardha-Māgadhī),[27] or an in-

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[22] See Pāli Tipiṭakaṃ Concordance, Volume II, p. 27, s.v. kamma.

[23] Geiger, op. cit., § 82.

[24] W. D. Whitney, Sanskrit Grammar, Cambridge (Mass.) 1898, § 336e.

[25] Geiger, op. cit., § 94.

[26] R. Pischel, Grammatik der Prākrit-Sprachen, Strassbourg 1900, § 404.

[27] aṃtaṃ pāvaṃti kammuṇaṃ (Sūyagaḍaṃga I. 15.10 = Suttāgame, Volume II,
p. 132), glossed: karmaṇāṃ jñānāvaraṇādīnaṃ antaṃ paryavasānaṃ prāpnuvanti.

dependent example of labialisation. Other influences may, how-
ever, have helped. There is in Pāli a development of genitive
plural forms in *-ūnaṃ* which may have led to the appearance of
-u- in other forms, e.g. *rājūnaṃ*[28] from *rājan-*, *pitūnaṃ*[29] from
pitar-, as well as the expected forms from *-u* stems. We also find
forms from *-u* stems shortened for metrical reasons, e.g. *bhikkhu-
naṃ*,[30] and the other *-ūnaṃ* forms may well have occurred as
-unaṃ. It is also possible that the change of *-ā-* > *-u-* occurred
in the North-Western Prakrit. Konow, referring to certain words
containing *-u-* in the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions, remarked, "It is
possible that we have to do with a change of *ā* to *u* before *n*,
of a similar kind as in Pashto".[31]

3.5. The further development of *-unaṃ* > *-uno* enables us to state
categorically that the ending *-uno* could not have been introduced
into Pāli from Sinhalese because such a form did not occur in
that language. The plural oblique case in Sinhalese has the endings
-an and *-un* < *-ana* < *-ānaṃ* < *-ānām*,[32] and neither in the sing-
ular nor the plural does a form ending in *-o* occur.[33] There is
therefore no reason why a Sinhalese scribe should have replaced
the ending *-ānaṃ* which he received (if *-kappānaṃ* was in the
text he was transmitting) by *-uno*.

3.6. The most likely explanation of *-uno* is that it is an example
of the change of final *-aṃ* > *-o*. This change is a characteristic
of the North-Western Prakrit in early Middle Indo-Aryan, e.g. the
Shāhbāzgaṛhī version of the Aśokan inscriptions has only a few
examples of *-o* written for *-aṃ*, but in the Gāndhārī Dharmapada,
the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions from North-West India and Chinese
Turkestan, and in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, the change becomes

[28] Geiger, *op. cit.*, § 92.

[29] *ibid.*, § 91.

[30] *ibid.*, § 83.8.

[31] S. Konow, *Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Volume II,
Part 1, Calcutta 1929, p. xcvi (referring to *kṣuṇa* and *erjhuṇa*).

[32] D. J. Wijayaratne, *History of the Sinhalese noun*, University of Ceylon 1956,
§ 59.

[33] *ibid.*, § 71 quotes *-o* forms only as the direct plural of an animate noun, not
found in Sinhalese until the tenth century A.D.

more common.[34] In the later Apabhraṃśa the change of -aṃ > -u
is usual,[35] suggesting that this change of final -aṃ was more
common in earlier Middle Indo-Aryan than our sources would
suggest. The -uno ending would therefore be an extension of this
change from the nominative and accusative singular ending to
the genitive plural. This suggestion is supported by the existence
of the genitive plural ending -ānu in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit.[36]

4. The dating of the endings

4.1. The discussion so far has indicated that it is unlikely that
the endings -e and -uno could have been introduced into Pāli in
Ceylon. An examination of the dates when the endings -e and -un
were in use in Ceylon provides additional evidence for this belief.

4.2. The nominative singular ending -e is found in Sinhalese
inscriptions from the third century B.C. to the second century
A.D.[37] We can therefore deduce that if the insertions were made
in Ceylon it must have been either during the period of oral
transmission, i.e. between the third and first centuries B.C., or
after the writing down of the canon in the first century B.C., but
before the disappearance of the -e ending in the second century
A.D. The first of these two periods is the more likely, because
if the scribes had been inclined to make changes during the period
of written transmission we should have expected to find some
trace of the insertion of the -i ending which developed from -e
and replaced it in inscriptions between the second and fourth
centuries A.D.[38]

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[34] Examples from Shāhbāzgaṛhī, etc., are conveniently collected together by
H. L. Dschi, "Die Umwandlung der Endung -aṃ in -o und -u im Mittelindischen",
NAWG 1944, Nr. 6, pp. 121–44. See also Brough, *op. cit.*, § 75, and F. Edgerton,
Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar, New Haven 1953, §§ 3.58, 8.30,36.

[35] Tagare, *op. cit.*, § 80.

[36] Edgerton, *op. cit.*, § 8.125. The Prakrit word *sāhāṇusāhi* "king of kings"
which shows the same ending is due to Iranian influence (see W. Norman Brown,
The Story of Kālaka, Washington 1933, p. 56 n. 10).

[37] Wijayaratne, *op. cit.*, § 48.a.

[38] W. Geiger, *A grammar of the Sinhalese language*, Colombo 1938, § 95.1.

4.3. The oblique case ending -an(a) is found in Sinhalese in-
scriptions from the first or second centuries A.D. onwards, but
the inscriptional and literary evidence shows that the ending -un
did not come into use until the eighth century A.D.[39] If the endings
were inserted in Ceylon, we should have to conclude that the
changes were made on two widely separated occasions, one before
the first century B.C., and the other after the eighth century A.D.
Not only is such a surmise implausible, but it does not account
satisfactorily for the fact that Buddhaghosa thought it necessary
to include the gloss *mahākappānaṃ*[40] in his commentary on the
Dīgha-nikāya, indicating that -*kappuno* or some other anomalous
form was already in the Pāli canon by the fifth century A.D.
Even if we accept that the ending -*un* might have been in use
earlier than the eighth century A.D., it is most unlikely that it
would have remained unattested for three hundred years between
the fifth and the eighth centuries.

5. Conclusions

5.1. The nominative singular forms in -*e* could have been bor-
rowed into Pāli from Māgadhī, Sinhalese Prakrit, or a North-
Western Prakrit. The fact that a mixture of -*e* and -*o* forms is
found in the accounts of the heretics' doctrines in both Pāli and
Jain texts indicates that the source of the -*e* forms existed on the
mainland of India.

5.2. Genitive plural endings in -*ūnaṃ* and -*unaṃ* are found in
Pāli and Prakrit, and words showing the change -*āna*- > -*una*-
are found in the North-Western Prakrit. The ending -*un* comes
into use in Sinhalese too late to be the source of the ending -*uno*.

5.3. Sinhalese Prakrit had no genitive plural form ending in -*o*.
The change of -*aṃ* > -*o* is a North-Western feature in early Middle
Indo-Aryan, and a genitive plural ending -*ānu* occurs in Buddhist
Hybrid Sanskrit.

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[39] Wijayaratne, *op. cit.*, § 72(ii).
[40] See note 9 above.

5.4. The anomalous forms in Pāli were not taken over from Sinhalese, but from a mainland, probably North-Western,[41] Prakrit.

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[41] The possibility exists of the Ājīvikas' language being akin to Māgadhī because of the nominative singular in -e, but the change of -aṃ to -o supports a North-Western origin. If the word *hupeyya* "it may be" uttered by the Ājīvika Upaka to the Buddha (Vin I 8,30) was typical of the Ājīvikas' dialect, it differed somewhat from Māgadhī.