Question-particles and relative clauses in the history of Sinhala, with comparison to early and modern Dravidian

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I Introduction: relative clauses and Q-particles

This paper examines the evolution of two separate but interrelated aspects of the grammar of Sinhala, an Indo-Aryan language spoken in the island nation of Sri Lanka (the former Ceylon): the distribution of the Question-particle da and the formation of relatives clauses in the history of Sinhala. I also examine the structure of relative clauses and the distribution of Question-particles in genetically-unrelated but geographically-proximate Dravidian. The possible role of language contact in the evolution of certain Sinhala grammatical structures—including the employment of the particle da—which have no parallels in other Indo-Aryan languages—is also considered.

Sinhala is the southernmost Indo-Aryan language (together with Dhivehi, a closely-related language spoken in the Maldives), and has been isolated from the Indo-Aryan languages of the north Indian mainland for over two millennia. It has, however, been in contact with southern Dravidian languages (forms of Tamil and the ancestor of Tamil and Malayalam) and exhibits some degree of convergence with Dravidian in terms of its phonology, syntax, morphology, and lexicon—but remains recognisably Indo-Aryan. See further Gair 1982/1998 for a general description of Sinhala and the

1Glossing abbreviations:
1 = 1st person; 2 = 2nd person; 3 = 3rd person; A = -a/-ā verbal suffix (“neutral”); ABL = ablative (case); ACC = accusative (case); ADJ = adjective; ADV = adverb; ANIM = animate; ART = article; COMP = complementiser; COND = conditional; CONV = converb; DAT = dative (case); DEF = definite; E = -e/ē verbal suffix (“focussing”); EMPH = emphatic (particle); F = focus/focussed; FEM = feminine; FUT = future; GEN = genitive (case); GER = gerund; IMPV = imperative; INANIM = inanimate; INDEF = indefinite; INF = infinitive; INST = instrumental (case); LOC = locative (case); MASC = masculine; NEG = negation/negative; NEU = neuter; NMLZ = nominaliser; NOM = nominative (case); PART = particle; PASS = past; PERF = perfect; PERM = permissive; PL = plural; POL = polite (form); PRES = present; PTCP = participle; Q = Q(uestion)-particle; REL-PRON = relative pronoun; QUOT = quotative; SG = singular; SUBJ = subjunctive; VN = verbal noun; VOC = vocative (case).
2On which see Cain (2000).
3See Gair (1976/1998) who notes “...the survival of Sinhala as a clearly Indo-Aryan language might be looked on as a minor miracle of linguistic and cultural history”; see also Karunatillaka (1977). On the potential for over-estimating
impact of Dravidian. I consider here four distinct stages/forms of Sinhala: (1) Old Sinhala [OS], represented by the graffiti texts on the Mirror Wall at Sihigiri (ca. 8th–10th c. A.D.); (2) Classical Sinhala [CS], represented largely by translations and commentaries on Pāli Buddhist texts (ca. 12th–15th c. A.D.); and two varieties of modern Sinhala: (3) Modern Literary Sinhala [LS], which differs from Classical Sinhala, but retains a number of archaisms such as overt subject-verb agreement morphology; and (4) Modern Colloquial Sinhala [MCS]. The latter two varieties coexist in a diglossic relationship, with the literary variety being employed in written and formal situations, but the general archaic nature of the literary variety justifies its treatment as representing an earlier variety than does the colloquial—on Sinhala diglossia, see further Gair (1968[1998], 1986[1998]a) and Paolillo (1992).

Da is an instance of what are often termed “Question”-particles [Q-particles]—so-called because interrogatives are a crosslinguistically common environment for such particles—a class of particles which also includes Japanese ka, Malayalam -oo, Tlingit gé and sá, and Hungarian vagy, as well as Sinhala hari/hō (see, amongst others, Hagstrom 1998, Cable 2007, Jayaseelan 2001, Jayaseelan 2008, Slade 2011, Szabolcsi et al. 2012).

The full range of contexts for Sinhala da/də will be examined later in this chapter; first let us observe the structure of relative clauses in Sinhala. In modern colloquial Sinhala [MCS], the only extant type of relative clause is the prenominal modifying participle type exemplified by (1).

(1) [ [ guruwərayek wena mahattəya ] huŋgak dannəwa. ]
   [ [ teacher.indef.nom become.pres.adj ] man.def ] much know.pres
   “The man who is becoming a teacher knows a lot.” (cited from Gair 1995[1998]: 245)
   [Colloquial Sinhala]

However, ‘true’ relative clauses involving relative pronouns and correlative clauses are well attested in Classical Sinhala and in modern literary Sinhala. This type of relative clause is formed by using yam⁶ (possibly modifying a noun), co-referring to a correlative demonstrative (expressed or implied) in the correlative main clause. Additionally, either the Q-particle da or the conditional particle nam must occur at the end of the relative clause.

In modern literary Sinhala, where we find relative clauses formed using the relative pronoun yam and either the Q-particle da or the conditional particle nam, such constructions always seem to have the sense of generalising relatives, i.e. to be of the type “whoever speaks thus is a fool”. Example (2) is representative.

(2) [ yam kumariyak ohu duțuvā ]rc da [ oo ohu kerehi piliṇḍa ]
   [ REL-PRON princess.indef him see.past.3sg.fem ]rc da [ she him towards connected
   sit ætikara gattāya ]cc
   mind developed get.past.3sg.fem ]cc

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³The role of Dravidian influence on the evolution of Sinhala phonology see Gair (1985[1998]).
⁴On the notion of Q-particles, see Baker (1970), amongst others.
⁵Yam in fact descends from the Old Indo-Aryan relative pronoun base, ya-. Yam can act as an indefinite pronoun as well.
“Whatever princess saw him fell in love with him.” (cited from Gair & Karunatilaka 1974: 295) [Literary Sinhala]

In Tamil—as noted above, a language with which Sinhala has long been in contact—we find constructions which are structurally similar to the relative clause constructions of Classical and modern literary Sinhala, as shown by examples like (3).

(3) \[
yār \text{ anikē mutalil vantu ceru-v-ār } \text{RC-oo avar}
\]
\[
\text{REL-PRON.NOM there first come.CONV arrive.FUT.3PL } \text{RC-oo they.NOM.PL}
\]
\[
\text{ticket.NOM buy.PERF } \text{CC}
\]

“This Let whoever reaches there first buy the tickets.” [Modern Tamil]
(cited from Annamalai & Steever 1998)

As in Classical and modern literary Sinhala, we find here in Dravidian a relative clause headed by a relative pronoun (Sinhala yam : Tamil yār) and a final “clause-closing” particle (Sinhala da/nam : Tamil -oo). Note that—as discussed later—just as Sinhala da occurs in interrogatives, indefinites, and disjunctions, so too do Dravidian particles like Tamil -oo.

Turning to earlier Sinhala: in Classical Sinhala as well yam-da/nam relatives tend to have the free relative generalising sense typical of such constructions in modern literary Sinhala (see examples like (2) above), as in example (4).

(4) \[
\text{yamak'hu paḷamu diṭim } \text{RC da ohu marā gaṇan sapurami}
\]
\[
\text{REL-PRON.MSC.SG firstly see.ISSG } \text{RC da him.kill.CONV number complete.PRES.ISSG}
\]
\[
\text{ticket.NOM buy.PERF } \text{CC}
\]

“Whichever person I see first, I shall kill him and complete the number.” (Amāvatura 133, cited from Wijemanne 1984: 210) [Classical Sinhala]

This is apparently not always the case, as evidenced by examples such as (5), where the relative appears to refer to a specific individual.

(5) \[
mam yamak'hu-ge savuyem } \text{RC da ohu-ge guṇa asava } \text{CC}
\]
\[
\text{REL-PRON.SG.GEN follow(?) } \text{RC da his virtues listen.IMP } \text{CC}
\]

“Listen to the virtues of the person whose follower I am.” (Amāvatura 93, cited from Wijemanne 1984: 210) [Classical Sinhala]

However, instead of da, we also find—in both Classical Sinhala and modern literary Sinhala—relatives formed with the conditional particle nam in place of the Q-particle da. The modern literary Sinhala example in (2) may have its da replaced by nam without change in meaning. An example of a nam-type relative from Classical Sinhala appears below in (6).
The connection between the conditional construction and generalising relatives is transparent: (6) can also be interpreted as meaning “If a layman is able to refute their arguments, then they become his wives”. Herein, however, I am most concerned with the appearance of the Q-particle da in the formation of relative clauses. This is a feature confined to Classical Sinhala and modern literary Sinhala; neither in modern colloquial Sinhala nor in Old Sinhala (pre-dating Classical Sinhala) do we find da(⁄də) used in the formation of relative clauses. For the most part, as in modern colloquial Sinhala, relative clauses in Old Sinhala are of the prenominal modifying participle type; there are a handful of examples exhibiting use of the pronoun yam, which will be examined later in this chapter.

The next section examines the appearance of the Q-particle da in other syntactic contexts in the history of Sinhala.

2 The distribution of da in the history of Sinhala

The particle da (⁄ earlier Sinhala də) is found (obligatorily) in a wide variety of syntactic contexts in modern colloquial Sinhala. Wh-questions in Sinhala employ this Q-particle də, and the verb takes the special “focussing” -e ending (following Kishimoto 2005, I refer to this as the -e ending, glossed as -E), distinguished from the neutral ending (the -a ending, glossed as -A). Compare the declarative in (7) with the corresponding interrogative in (8).

(7) Chitra potə gatta
Chitra book bought.A
“Chitra bought the book.” [Colloquial Sinhala]

(8) Chitra monəwa də gatte
Chitra what də bought.E
“What did Chitra buy?” [Colloquial Sinhala]

Wh-words along with their associated Q-particle (and any intervening material) may also be dislocated to the right of the verb of the clause over which they take scope, as in example (9). This movement is characteristic of focussed elements in Sinhala.

(9) Chitra gatte monəwa də?
Chitra bought-E what də

“What did Chitra buy?” [Colloquial Sinhala]

The particle də is obligatory in wb-questions, regardless of the form of the verb, as shown in (10).

(10) *Chitra monəwa gatta/gatte?
    Chitra what bought-A/bought-E
    “What did Chitra buy?” [Colloquial Sinhala]

The -e marking of the verb is obligatory in wb-questions, see (11) and (12), respectively.

(11) *Chitra monəwa də gatta?
    Chitra what də bought-A
    “What did Chitra buy?” [Colloquial Sinhala]

(12) *Chitra monəwa gatta də?
    Chitra what bought-A də
    “What did Chitra buy?” [Colloquial Sinhala]

Without the -e marking on the verb, a wb-word accompanied by a Q-particle is interpreted as an indefinite, as can be seen by the contrast in (13-a) and (13-b).8

(13) [Colloquial Sinhala]
    a. mokak də wætune?
       what də fell-E
       “What fell?” (Hagstrom 1998)
    b. mokak də wætuna.
       what də fell-A
       “Something (unidentified) fell.” (Gair & Sumangala 1991)

In yes/no-questions, də also appears obligatorily, normally in clause-final position, as in example (14); in which case the verb appears with the “neutral” -a inflection.

(14) Chitra ee potə kieuwa də?
    Chitra that book read-A də
    “Did Chitra read that book?” (Kishimoto 2005: 11) [Colloquial Sinhala]

The particle də may also appear after a constituent smaller than IP—in which case it marks that constituent as focussed (15), and, as expected, the verb appears in the -e form.

(15) Chitra ee potə də kieuwe?
    Chitra that book də read-E

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7Unless də appears clause-finally, which it cannot generally do when the wb-word is in the matrix clause.
8See Ramchand (1997), who discusses a similar situation in Bengali.
“Was it that book which Chitra read?”  

Finally, \( də \) is also involved crucially in the formation of interrogative disjunctions (i.e. alternative questions), appearing obligatory after each of the disjuncts, as in example (16).

(16)  

Gunəpāḷə \( də \) Chitra \( də \) Ranjit \( də \) gamaṭa giyē?  
Gunapala \( də \) Chitra \( də \) Ranjit \( də \) village.DAT go.PAST.E  
“Was it Gunapala or Chitra or Ranjit who went to the village?”  

Two other related particles are also found in Sinhala, \( bari \) (earlier \( bō \)), and \( vat \), the former appearing in non-interrogative disjunctions and, like \( də \), also in the formation of \( wh-\)-based indefinites (though involving different pragmatics than \( WH+də \) indefinites); the latter acting as an negative polarity item \([NPI]-counterpart of bari\). Neither is discussed further here; on these, see Slade (2011), Slade (2015).

While other Indo-Aryan languages do not employ particles resembling \( də \) (in their syntactic distribution), similar particles are found in Dravidian languages. In Malayalam, for instance, the particle -\( oo \) appears in yes/no and alternative questions, as in examples (17) and (18); declarative disjunctions,\(^9\) as in example (19); and in the formation of indefinites, as in (20).

(17)  

John wannu-(\( w \))\( oo \)?  
John came-\( oo \)  
“Did John come?”  

(18)  

John wannu-(\( w \))\( oo \), illa-(\( y \))\( oo \)?  
John came-\( oo \), not-\( oo \)  
“Did John come, or not?”

(19)  

Mary John-\( ACC-oo \) Bill-\( ACC-oo \) cumbiccu  
Mary John-\( ACC-oo \) Bill-\( ACC-oo \) kissed  
“Mary kissed John or Bill.”

(20)  

\( ñaññ \) iruṭṭ-il aar-e-(\( y \))\( oo \) toṭṭu  
I darkness-in who-\( ACC-oo \) touched  
“I touched somebody in the dark.”

Finally, as in Classical Sinhala and modern literary Sinhala—and Tamil, see example (3) above—Malayalam employs the Q-particle -\( oo \) in the formation of relative clauses, as in example (21).\(^10\)

(21)  

\( eetə \) daivam ellaavastukkalilum unṭ-\( oo \) aa daivatte praartthikkunnu  
which god all object.PL.LOC be.PRES-\( oo \) that god.ACC pray.PRES

\(^9\)Here we may note an important difference between Sinhala and Malayalam: while Sinhala \( də \) is restricted to interrogative disjunctions (with \( bari \) or \( vat \) appearing in non-interrogative contexts), Malayalam -\( oo \) appears in both interrogative (18) and declarative disjunctions (19).

\(^10\)The use of -\( oo \) in Malayalam relative clauses is in fact optional, as discussed below.
“I pray to the god who is in every object.” (cited from Asher & Kumari 1997: 53) [Malayalam]

The crosslinguistic employment of Q-particles in this set of syntactically-disparate contexts (interrogatives, indefinites, relatives) can be given a semantically-unified analysis if we recognise that what these contexts share in common is the presence of some element which denotes a Hamblin-type set—either a \textit{wh}-word or a disjunction; the semantic function of Q-particles like Sinhala \textit{da} can then be seen as that of selecting an element from this set. These issues are explored in detail in Slade (2011) (cp. Hamblin 1973, Hagstrom 1998, Alonso-Ovalle 2006, Cable 2007); here I am more concerned in distinguishing these environments:— in particular, in examining the historical development of Sinhala \textit{da} with respect to the syntactic environments in which it is found.

In earlier forms of Sinhala we indeed find \textit{da} (the source of MCS \textit{də}) appearing in some of the crosslinguistically-typical contexts for Q-particles; Table 1 provides an overview.\footnote{\(X\) indicates optionality. \(X(?)\) indicates that no examples of that category have been found, but \textit{da} is presumed to have occurred in that context.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Old Sinhala</th>
<th>Cl. Sinhala</th>
<th>mod. lit. Sinhala</th>
<th>mod. col. Sinhala</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes/no-question</td>
<td>(X)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>\textit{wb}-question</td>
<td>(X)</td>
<td>(X)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>(X)</td>
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<tr>
<td>alternative question</td>
<td>(X(?))</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{wb}-indefinite</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>rel. clauses w/ \textit{yam}</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>n/a\footnote{(\text{\textsuperscript{12}})}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Appearance of \textit{da/də} in various syntactic contexts in the history of Sinhala

In Old Sinhala, \textit{da} is found occasionally in \textit{wb}-questions—in contrast to its obligatory appearance in this syntactic environment in the modern forms of the language. Examples (22)–(24) provide examples of \textit{da}-less Old Sinhala \textit{wb}-questions; examples (25)–(28) provide representative examples of Old Sinhala \textit{wb}-questions including \textit{da}.

(22) Digesni kum koṭ sahannemi?
long-eyed.VOC what do.CONV endure.PRES.1SG
“O long-eyed one, what may I do to sustain myself?” (lit. “having done what, shall I bear myself up?”) [\textit{Sigiri Graffiti 123}] [Old Sinhala]

(23) No balaya yanne kese?
not look.CONV go.PAST.ETC.NOM how
“How does one go away without looking?” [\textit{Sigiri Graffiti 261}] [Old Sinhala]

(24) Sav-abaranin saji girī-hisa sitīhi kumāṭa?
all-ornaments.INSTR adorned mountain-summit.LOC be.PRES.2SG what.DAT

\footnote{Given that modern colloquial Sinhala has lost the \textit{yam}-type relative clause formation, the absence of \textit{də/da} in this context is due to the absence of this syntactic environment itself.}
“Why do you, being adorned with all ornaments, stand on the summit of the mountain?”
[Sigiri Graffiti 3] [Old Sinhala]

(25) Sihin piḷi hann aga neli-pala vann liya tana kiya valā se pənəyə fine cloth clad limb coconut like maiden breast say.IMPV cloud like appear.OPT? ke da?
what da?

“Of that maiden whose limbs are draped with fine-textured garments, her breasts are like coconuts; say, what appears like the clouds?” [Sigiri Graffiti 379] [Old Sinhala]

(26) Ayuyun hay tī kaḷa kima da?
come.PAST.PTCP.GEN.PL with you.GEN do.PAST what da
“What has been done by you with those who came here?” [Sigiri Graffiti 384] [Old Sinhala]

(27) Kum vi da?
What be.PAST.3SG da
“What happened?” [Sigiri Graffiti 490] [Old Sinhala]

(28) Ko ja (=da)giye himiya yi balam sitiyuyun where da go.PAST.PTCP.NOM lord COMP looking be.PRES.PTCP.PL.OBL vanno?
seem.NOM.PL

“They seem as if they stood (there) looking backwards (wondering) ‘Where has their lord gone?’” [Sigiri Graffiti 109] [Old Sinhala]

In Old Sinhala, da is extremely frequent in yes/no questions, as in examples like (30)—being found in this environment much more frequently than it is in wh-questions. Where da is absent in yes/no questions, these often contain matrix negation no; however, even non-negative questions do not obligatorily require da, as evidenced by examples like (29).

(29) Minisek vemi?
man.INDEF be.PRES.1SG
“Am I a man?” [Sigiri Graffiti 240] [Old Sinhala]

(30) Damak kaṇḍa hāt nigæḷi pat mahanel chain.INDEF break.PAST elephant fetter.PAST.PTCP.NOM petal blue water-lily kaṇḍanne da?
break.PRES.PTCP.NOM da

See Paranavitana (1976: §100) on this form.
Answer: Her hair, of course.
Ja here appears to be a back-spelling for da (see Gair 1986[1998]: 166). In Sinhala, earlier intervocalic k became voiced to j, subsequently merging with d—this also appears to have affected initial k in enclitics, e.g. -ug, -uṣ, -ud, -udu, ut “and” < -ca, -iça < Skt. ca “and” (see Geiger 1941).
“Does the elephant, having broken a chain (by which it is) fettered, break (then) the petals of the water-lily?” [Sigiri Graffiti 39]

A rough count shows da occurring in approximately half of all yes/no-questions (and approximately two thirds of non-negative yes/no questions), but in only about a quarter of wh-questions.

In the next stage of Sinhala, Classical Sinhala, it appears that yes/no-questions usually include da, as in example (31).

(31) To me suta Budun desannā āsūhu da?
2SG-PRN this sermon Buddha preach.PRES.PTCP.NOM hear.PAST.2SG da
“Did you hear the Buddha preaching this sermon?” [Amāvatura 228, cited from Wijemanne 1984: 71] [Classical Sinhala]

Wh-questions in Classical Sinhala still display optionality in the use of da; compare the da-less (32) and (33) with examples (34) and (35) which include da.

(32) Kotaṭa giyehi?
where.DAT go.PAST.2SG
“Where did you go?” [Amāvatura 136]

(33) Mohu koyaṭa yeti?
these (people) where.DAT go.PRES.3SG
“Where are these people going?” [Amāvatura 189] [Classical Sinhala]

(34) Dën paeviji væ kumaṭa kīyam da?
now ordained been what.DAT say.PRES.1SG da
“Now that I am a monk, why would I say it?” [Amāvatura 76] [Classical Sinhala]

(35) Mese da vaḍane kumaṭa da yi kīha.
thus also go.PRES.PTCP.NOM what.DAT da QUOT say.PAST.3PL
“‘Why do you go thus?’ they asked.” [Amāvatura 145] [Classical Sinhala]

Finally, like in modern Sinhala, alternative questions show the use of da after each disjunct, as in example (36).

(36) mā . . . nuvaṭahu arabhayā kī dē nipaṇa da no nipaṇa da?
my . . . religious mendicant about said things QUOT born da NEG born da?
“Did my predictions regarding the religious mendicant prove correct or did they not?”(12th century, Amāvatura 178) (Wijemanne 1984: 75) [Classical Sinhala]

Though I have not found examples of da used in interrogative disjunctions in the Old Sinhala Sihigiri graffiti texts, I presume that it would have been used in this environment in this stage of the language—given not only the Classical Sinhala use as in examples like (36), but also the fact that the Old Indo-
Aryan source of *da*də, namely Old Indo-Aryan utābo, appeared only in this context and thus it is presumably from this context that *da* spread into other interrogative contexts. This and other aspects of the earlier history of the particle *da*də are explored in the next section.

3 The pre-history of *da*

The Sinhala Q-particle *da*də derives ultimately from Old Indo-Aryan utābo (Turner 1962–1966: #1701), which is itself made up of two particles, ăbo and utā.

_Utā_ is a particle used in Vedic with the sense ‘and’ (Klein 1978), with both X utā Y (37) and X Y utā (38) orders.

(37) mitrō dādhāra pr̥thivī́m utā dyām
contract.MASC.SG.NOM hold.PRES.3SG earth.SG.ACC uta heaven.SG.ACC
“Contract holds (together) earth and heaven.” [RV 3.59,1b] [Sanskrit]

(38) divās pr̥thivyā utā carkirāma
heaven.SG.GEN earth.SG.GEN uta praise.SUBJ.IPL
“Heaven and earth we shall praise.” [RV 4.39,1b] [Sanskrit]

In Classical Sanskrit, this conjunctive sense of _uta_ is obsolete (Speijer 1886: §424), though _uta_—like _api_ ‘too, also, moreover, and; even; though’—may stand at the beginning of a clause as in (40), functioning as a Q-particle like Sanskrit _kim_, see (39).°

(39) kim śaknoṣi? / śaknoṣi kim?
be-able-PRES.2SG / be-able-PRES.2SG Q
“Can you?” (Speijer 1886: §412) [Sanskrit]

(40) uta dānḍaḥ patiṣyati?
utra stick-NOM.SG. fall-FUT.3SG
“Will the stick fall?” (Kāśikā on Pāṇini 3.3.3,152)(Speijer 1886: §412) [Sanskrit]

The particle ăbo first appears in late Vedic Sanskrit, positioned at the front of the second clause in a

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° Sanskrit _kim_ is the nominative/accusative case-form of the neuter interrogative _wh_-pronoun which also is used as a _wh_-interrogative pronoun in the sense “what”. Modern Hindi displays a similar phenomenon: the inanimate _wh_-interrogative pronoun _kyā_ “what” can also optionally stand at the beginning or end of a yes/no-question:

(i) [Hindi]

a. Rām yahā hai _kyā_?
Ram here be-PRES.3SG Q
“Is Ram here?”

b. _Kyā_ Rām yahā hai?
Q Ram here be-PRES.3SG
“Is Ram here?”
disjoint ‘either...or’ construction, see (41). Note here that utá appears at the front of the first clause of the disjunction.\textsuperscript{17}

(41) utá \textit{avidvā́n} amúṁ lokáṁ prétya kaścānā
\textit{uṭa} one who does not know.NOM.SG yonder.ACC.SG world.ACC.SG depart.GER anyone
gacchatī / āho vidvā́n amúṁ lokáṁ prétya
go.PRES.3SG / ābo one who knows.NOM.SG yonder.ACC.SG world.ACC.SG depart.GER
kaścit sámaśnutāṣī / anyone reach.PRES.3SG /

‘Does anyone who does not know, having died, go to yonder world, or does anyone who knows, having died, attain yonder world?’ (\textit{Tāttrīrīya Upaniṣad} v.ह, cited from Böhtlingk & Roth 1855–1875)\textsuperscript{18} [Sanskrit]

It is from this utá ABC \ldots ābo XYZ construction that the form utābo seems to derive. Since utá may appear at the front of an interrogative clause (functioning as a Q-particle), it could also immediately

\textsuperscript{17}Disjunctive constructions involving utá exist in earlier Vedic verse (pre-dating the Vedic prose discussed above) where we also find utá combining with vā “or” in the sequence utá vā, as in (i); however, it is not clear if or how this differs semantically from vā alone.

(i) yāḥ āpaḥ divyāḥ utā vā srāvanti khaṇītrimāḥ utā vā
REL-PRON.PL water.NOM.PL divine.ADJ.NOM.PL \textit{uṭa or} flow.PRES.3PL produced-by-digging.NOM.PL. \textit{uṭa or}
yāḥ svayāṇijāḥ / samudrārthāḥ yāḥ śucayaḥ
REL-PRON.NOM.PL self-born.NOM.PL / ocean-goal.NOM.PL REL-PRON.NOM.PL shining.ADJ.NOM.PL
pāvakās tāḥ āpaḥ devīḥ ihā mām avantu //
clear.ADJ.NOM.PL those.NOM.PL water.NOM.PL goddess.NOM.PL here me.ACC.SG watch-over.IMPV.PL //

“These waters which are divine, or those which flow dug up from the earth, or those which are self-produced, with the ocean as their goal, shining and clear, may those water-goddesses watch over me here.” [RV 7.49.2] [Sanskrit]

Graßmann (1873) notes one example where utá co-occurs with vā but is separated from it:

(ii) idām āpaḥ prá vahata yāt kim
here/(this side/this place) water.VOC.PL away drive.IMPV.2PL REL-PRON.NEU.NOM/ACC.SG what.NEU.NOM/ACC.SG
cä duritām māyā / yāt vā _ahám abhidudrōha
and/moreover fault me.LOC.SG / REL-PRON.NEU.NOM/ACC.SG or I.NOM.SG hurt.PERF.1SG
yāt vá śepé utā anṛtam //
REL-PRON.NEU.NOM/ACC.SG or curse/Swear.PREF.1SG utā untruth/unlawfulness/chaos.NEU.NOM/ACC.SG //

“O Waters, here drive away whatever fault is in me: if I hurt (someone) or if I swore untruthfully.” [RV i.23.22] [Sanskrit]

\textsuperscript{18}3, e.g. in gacchatī, marks pluti, the ‘overlong vowel’.

Geldner (1951–1957: 23) appears to prefer to treat utā as separate from vā and renders it as “and”: “Ihr Gewässer, führet all das fort, was von Fehle an mir ist, sei es daß ich treulos war, oder daß ich geflucht habe und jede Unwahrheit!” (“You Waters, drive off all this, what fault it is in me, be it that I was disloyal or that I cursed, and every untruth!”)

However, in these examples utā does not signal a question, and so there appears to be little connection between the early Vedic constructions with utā vā and the later Vedic prose construction utā \ldots ābo (which later becomes utābo, the ancestor of Sinhala \textit{da/də}).
precede the āho standing at the front of the second part of a disjunction, with the application of sandhi becoming utāho. And it is in this form (utāho), that it appears in Classical Sanskrit, as in (42) below (note that here in addition to utābo, we find the normal disjunction vā).

(42) kiṁ mama vadhopāyakramaḥ kubjasya vā_utābo anyasya vā kasyacit
Q me-gen murder-plot.nom.sg hunchback-gen or_utābo other-gen or someone-gen
“Is it I, against whom the murder-plot is laid, or is it the hunchback or somebody else?”
(Pañcatantra 332) (Speijer 1886: §415) [Sanskrit]

In Classical Sanskrit utābo may also occur without kiṁ (or vā), e.g. as in (43).

(43) buddhi-bhedah para-kṛta utāho te svato
intellect-pollution-nom.sg enemy-do-past.ptcp.nom.sg utābo you self-gen
‘bhavat
become-past.3sg
“Has the pollution of your intellect been brought about by enemies or by you yourself?”
(Bhāgavata-Purāṇa 7.5.10) [Sanskrit]

And āho by itself may appear in place of utābo, e.g. (44).

(44) teṣāṁ niṣṭhā... kā... sattvam āho rajas tamah?
they-gen state-nom.fem... what-nom.fem... purity āho passion darkness/ignorance
“What is their condition? Purity, passion or ignorance?” (Bhagavadgītā 17.1) [Sanskrit]

In Pāli, the distribution of udābo (< utābo) appears to be similar, cp. the Pāli example in (45) with the Sanskrit example in (42).

(45) kiṁ amhehi saddhiṅ āgamissasi udāhu pacchā?
Q us with come-fut.2sg udābu later
“Will you come with us or later?” (Buddhaghosa’s commentary on the Dhammapada ii.96) [Pāli]

Pāli udābu also appears with uda (cognate with Sanskrit uta, see above) as the question particle:

(46) atthaṅgato so uda và so natthi... udāhu
he who has reached the end Q... or he not exist... udābu
ve sassatiyā arogo
he for eternity free from disease
‘He who has reached the end: does he not exist, or is he for eternity without disease?’
[Sri Lanka Buddha Jayanti Tripitaka Series p. 330] [Pāli]

*Speijer (1886: §414) remarks that instead of utābo or āho, we may also find utasvit or ābosvit. However, it is specifically from utābo that Sinhala ās develops.
As in Sanskrit, Pāli *udābu* also occurs without the question particle *kiṃ*, as in the examples below.\(^{20}\)

\[(47)\] saccāni sutāni bahuni nānā *udābu* te takkam anussaranti
travths heard manv various *udābu* they follow conjecture
“Have they learned many various truths or do they follow conjecture?” [Sri Lanka Buddha Jayanti Tripitaka Series p. 280]

\[(48)\] ettāvata \_aggaṁ no vadanti ha \_eke yakkhassa saccāni
idha to that extent highest NEG say.PRES.3PL EMPH ones yakkha.gen purification in this place
paṇḍitāse *udāhu* anṛ̱mpī vadanti ettto
pundits *udāhu* other say.PRES.3PL from this
“Do not some of the wise in this world tell us that the purity of the yakkha is the highest
to this extent, or do they say something different from this?” [Pali Text Society p. 171]

When we examine early Sinhala, we find that, in addition to frequently appearing in yes/no-questions,
*da* also is used in disjunctive interrogatives, as in example (36), repeated below as (49).

\[(49)\] mā . . . nuvaṭahu arabhayā kī dē nipaṇ na no nipaṇ *da?*
my . . . religious mendicant about said things QUOT born *da* NEG born *da?*
“Did my predictions regarding the religious mendicant prove correct or did they not?”
\[(12^\text{th}}\text{ century, Amāvatura 178}]\ (Wijemanne 1984: 75) [Classical Sinhala]

In addition to its extension to other interrogative contexts, *da* exhibits other syntactic changes
from its Sanskrit and Pāli precursors. Specifically, note that in Sanskrit and Pāli *utābhọ/udābu* PRECEDE
the disjunct, while in Sinhala *da* follows its disjunct. Thus the particle has undergone change from
being a proclitic-type element to an enclitic-type element. The motivation for this change is not

\(^{20}\)Occasionally the question particle *uda* itself seems to function as a disjunction, at least in interrogative contexts, as shown below:

\[(i)\] nirāsaso so *uda* āsasāno paññāṇavā so *uda* paññakapapi
without desire he *uda* (?) desiring discerning he *uda* still acquiring discernment
“Is he without desire, or desiring? Discerning or still acquiring discernment?” [Sri Lanka Buddha Jayanti
Tripitaka Series p. 316]

This use of *uda* could derive from ‘ambiguous’ uses (where *uda* could be rendered as either ‘or’ or ‘and’) of *uda* in examples like:

\[(ii)\] na brāhmaṇo no ’mhi na rājaputto na vessāyano *uda* koci no ’mhi
not brāhm in not be.PRES.1SG not king’s son not vaishya’s son *uda* any not be.PRES.1SG
“I am not a brāhm in (=priestly caste), nor a king’s son, nor any vaishya’s (=agricultural caste) son.’ (Lit., ‘I am not a brāhm in, nor a king’s son. And I am not any vaishya’s son.’ Or perhaps, treating *uda* as ‘and’: ‘I am not a brāhm in, not a king’s son, not a vaishya’s son. And I am not anybody.’) [Sri Lanka Buddha Jayanti Tripitaka
Series 457]
entirely clear, though one suspects that Dravidian influence may have played a role, given that Dravidian Q-particles are post-clausal enclitics. The status of Q-particles as proclitics vs. enclitics is not a major concern of the present study, so I leave further investigation of this matter to future research.

Turning back to the developments in the distribution of this particle, the general path of change appears to be that the ancestor of do (cognate with Sanskrit utāho, Pāli udābu) was reanalysed in Classical Sanskrit and Pāli as a disjunction used specifically in interrogative contexts. In prehistoric Sinhala, it was reanalysed as being a Q-particle; the distribution would have originally been restricted to alternative and yes/no-questions—representing a widening with respect to its Sanskrit and Pāli precursors. Later, da was extended to the construction of relative clauses (existing as an alternative to the “conditional” particle nam), as in the modern literary Sinhala example in (2), repeated below as (30).


And later still (in modern colloquial Sinhala) da (> do) also began to be used in the construction of certain types of indefinites, as indicated in Table 1 above.

It is of some interest that utā itself seems to have earlier been bimorphemic, where the initial element, ū, originally functioned as a focussing particle. More immediately relevant for the distribution of ū is Klein’s (1974) call ū ‘anaphoric’ (referring to an element already present in the discourse, rather than deitic), his discussion makes it clear that he analyses its original function as being that of focus: “we can render the ū [in an English translation–BMS] by ‘that very one’ or simply by stress” (Klein 1974: 165). (Klein’s notion of “anaphoricity” of ū may be compared to Rooth’s (Rooth 1985, 1992, 1996) idea that focus semantic values make reference to entities which are somehow already in the background of the discourse (the “alternatives” to a focussed element).) Examples of ū in this focussing function follow below:

(i) yāṁ tvāṁ agne samādahas / tāṁ u
REL-PRON.MASC/NEU.SG.ACC you.NOM.SG Agni voc burn-down.PAST.2SG / REL-PRON.MASC/NEU.SG.ACC u
nir vāpayā pūnāḥ extinguish.impv.2SG again

“The one which you, O Agni, have burnt down, that very one extinguish again.” [RV 10.16,13ab] [Sanskrit]

(ii) tāṁ u śtuhiṁ yō ha sātvā
REL-PRON.MASC.SG.ACC u praise.impv.2SG Indra masc.sg.acc REL-PRON.MASC.SG NOM PART warrior.sg.nom / yāḥ śūro maghāvā yō ratheṣṭhāḥ
REL-PRON.MASC.SG.NOM hero.sg.nom generous one.sg.nom REL-PRON.MASC.SG.NOM chariot-standing.sg.nom

“Praise that very one, Indra, who is a warrior, who is a hero, generous, who stands in a chariot.” [RV 1.173,5ab] [Sanskrit]

(iii) tāṁ u śtavāṁ yāṁ gira / indram uktāṁ
REL-PRON.MASC.SG.ACC u praise.ipl REL-PRON.MASC.SG.ACC SONG.PL.NOM / Indra masc.sg.acc hymn.pl.nom
of the later reflexes of utábo in Sinhala, it seems that the original environment of this element is specifically interrogative disjunction. Whatever the exact relationship between interrogative disjunctions and yes/no-questions, they at the very least share numerous properties and thus the fact that da appears more fully established in yes/no-questions than in wb-questions in early Sinhala is unsurprising. Once established in alternative and yes/no-questions, da appears to have gradually been generalised to all interrogative contexts, including wb-questions. In very recent history, it subsequently spread to appear in wb-indefinites as well. The revised Table 2 provides a hypothesised pattern of expansion of da from its origin as a particle specific to alternative questions.

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Table 2: Appearance of da/də in various syntactic contexts in the history of Sinhala (expanded)

vāṛḍhuh increase.past-perf.3pl

"That very one shall we praise: Indra, whom the songs (and) hymns have increased." [RV 8.95,6ab] [Sanskrit]

(iv) agniṁ vaḥ pārvyāṁ huve / hōṭāṁ śarṣṇināṁ // tām
Agni.masc.sg.acc you.pl.dat first invoke.isg / priest.masc.sg.acc person.pl.gen // pron.masc.sg.acc
ayā vacā gṛ̥ṇe u va stuṣe
this.sg.inst speech.sg.inst sing.isg pron.masc.sg.acc you.pl.dat praise.isg

"I invoke Agni, the priest of the folk, for you. I sing (of) him with this speech. That very one [=Agni] I praise for you." [RV 8.23,7] [Sanskrit]

(v) tām v abhi prārcata / indram sōmasya pītāye
masc.sg.acc u over praise-fort.impv.2sg / Indra.masc.acc.sg soma.sg.gen drink.inf.sg.dat

"Unto that very one, Indra, sing forth the praises for the drinking of the soma." [RV 8.92,5ab] [Sanskrit]

Later ā was reanalysed as a conjunction; examples with this function are given below:

(vi) saṁ te pāryāṁ sām u yantu vājāḥ
together you.sg.gen milk.nom.pl together u go.impv.3sg loot.nom.pl
"May the milks and the loots unite for you." [RV 1.91,18] [Sanskrit]

(vii) svār yād āśmann adhipā u āndhaḥ
sunlight.nom.sg when rock.sg.loc master.sg.nom u darkness.sg.nom
"When the sunlight is in the rock, and darkness is master." [RV 7.88,2c] [Sanskrit]

The particle utá seems to have been composed of this focussing particle u combined with *té (the clitic form of the demonstrative pronoun), originally meaning **that (very one) there** with later weakening to "and that" and finally to simply "and" (see Brugmann (1904: 100ff.) and Klein (1974: 179-180)).
As noted previously, Dravidian languages like Malayalam also possess particles with similar distribution (e.g. Malayalam -oo, see above), and—given the length of contact between Sinhala and some form of Tamil—the spread of da to the wide range of contexts in which it is found in modern Sinhala could reflect convergence with Dravidian; however, it is important to note that though the gross distribution of Sinhala da and Dravidian Q-particles like Malayalam -oo is similar, there are numerous important differences between Sinhala Q-particles and Dravidian Q-particles (on which see Slade 2011).

The use of da in relative clauses is difficult to position within this larger pattern of expansion of the environments of da, since it appears only in Classical Sinhala and modern literary Sinhala, but not in earlier Old Sinhala or in the modern colloquial language. This part of the development of da seems likely to represent a strong language contact phenomenon. The next section explores the relationship between Sinhala and Dravidian and other complications regarding developments in the structure of relatives clauses.

4 Back to relative clauses

The use of the Q-particle da in Classical and modern literary Sinhala relative-correlative constructions parallels the employment of the Dravidian Q-particle -oo, and the appearance of da in this syntactic environment is likely due to Dravidian influence, although the evidence is not entirely clear.

There is an additional complication regarding the status of such relative-correlatives in Classical Sinhala. As discussed below, Old Sigiri graffiti contain vanishingly few examples of yam relative constructions and none which involve the Q-particle da. The Classical Sinhala texts are largely translations of or commentaries upon Pāli Buddhist texts. And Wijemanne (1984: 212) remarks that “[a]lmost all the relative constructions in the Amāvatura [the text from which her examples are drawn—BMS] are exact renderings of Pali relative constructions”. This raises the question of the status of such constructions in Classical Sinhala: would they have been possible in ordinary language or do they represent a construction which is only part of the specialised “translation/commentary” register? However, even if this were to turn out to be the case, the basis for their syntactic structure would still remain to be explained:— neither Sanskrit nor Pāli employ any element resembling da in relative clauses.

In both Old Sinhala (see Paranavitana 1956: clxvii) and Old Tamil (see Hock 2008, referring to p.c. w/ Th. Lehmann) we find vanishingly few examples of relative-correlative structures (four examples in Old Sinhala; five to ten examples in Old Tamil).

Again, it is much more typical of Old Sinhala to use prenominal modifying participles rather than relative-correlative constructions, as in Modern Colloquial Sinhala (see above example (i)); (51) is a typical example of a prenominal modifying participle type “relative” in Old Sinhala.


See fn. 12 above.
Turning to an examination of the handful of true relative-correlative constructions found in Old Sinhala: *da* is not found in any of these and the conditional particle *nam* occurs in but a single example: graffiti 251, see (52)\(^\text{23}\); the remaining three examples (graffiti 240, 305, 682) employ no particle.

(52) [Pere yam hatin nam ma ]\(_{RC}\) [pahani-j [formerly REL-PRON know.PAST COND-PTC 1SG-PRN.ACC/GEN]\(_{RC}\) [satisfy.PAST nam alalæ mä ]\(_{RC}\) [e yat me et ]\(_{CC}\) COND-PTC love.LOC 1SG-PRN.GEN]\(_{RC}\) [3SG.ACC go.COND this come.PAST.3PL ]\(_{CC}\)

“She who was known (to me) earlier, who was satisfied in her love of me, when I go to her, these (people) are coming (from her).” [Sigiri Graffiti 251] [Old Sinhala]

In (53) is shown an example of an Old Sinhala relative clause involving the pronoun *yam*, but with no “clause-closing” particle like *nam* or *da*.

(53) Sihigiri aṅgnak baṅvat me yannā var sera se ho Sihigiri.LOC woman.INDEF speak.COND.CAUS this going occasion thief like 3SG.FEM-PRN

\(^{23}\)Interestingly, (52) involves a “stacking” of left-peripheral relative clauses, observed also in Sanskrit examples like (i) and found in some varieties of “elevated” Hindi like (ii), as discussed by Hock (1989a, 2013).

(i) [yó hatvā āhim ārita samātsu apadhā cave.]\(_{RC}\) [sā janāsa_indraḥ overpowering.NOM.SG.MASC battle.LOC.PL.FEM]\(_{RC}\) [CP.NOM.SG.MASC people.VOC.PL.MASC Indra.NOM.SG.MASC ]\(_{CC}\)

Who, having slain the dragon, made the seven rivers flow; who drove up the cows from the cave of Vala; who created fire between the two stones, overpowering in battle; he, O people, (is) Indra.” [RV 2.12.3] [Sanskrit]

(ii) [jis viṣṇu ne jagat kī śṛṣṭi kī CP.NOM.SG Vishnu agt world of.FEM creation.NOM.SG.FEM do.PERF.SG.FEM ]\(_{RC}\) [REL-PRON.NOM.SG viṣṇu uski raķā kartā hai ]\(_{RC}\) (…) [Vishnu.NOM.SG.MASC dem-PR.SG.FEM.MASC.GEN protection.NOM.SG.FEM do.IMPF.MASC.GEN be.PRES.3SG ]\(_{RC}\) (…) [

Which Vishnu created the world, which Vishnu protects it, . . . that Vishnu will again destroy it.” [cited from Hock 2013: 9–10] [Hindi]
When I, while passing by, speak to a lady of Sihigiri, she herself, roguishly24, looked in the direction (where) I (was). Women are like this.”  

Not only is (53) lacking a “clause-closing” particle, the correlative pronoun has also been elided, but presumably must be understood as in the reconstruction in (54).

(54)  

\[ \text{yam} \text{ dese}]\text{kae} \text{ mā bæli tomo. agan me} \text{ REL-PRON} \text{ direction.LOC.INDF} \text{ ISG-PRN.GEN look.PAST REFLEX-PRN.FEM. women this} \text{ niyā. manner} \]

“In which direction I (was), that direction she looked at.” [Old Sinhala]

The absence of a “clause-closing” particle is not unparalleled in Dravidian:— observe that in all of the Old Tamil examples, we in fact find that no particle follows the relative clause, as in example (55). Hock (1988, 1989b, 2008) points out that the same is true for Old Malayalam (see example (56)).

(55)  

\[ \text{e-vāri nall-avar āṭavar }]\text{RC} \text{ [ a-vāri nall-aï ]CC} \text{ [ which-place good.MASC.3PL men.MASC.3PL ]RC [ that-place good.2SG ]CC} \]

“At which place men are good, at that place you are good.” (cited from Lehmann 1998: 94)  

[Old Tamil]

(56)  

\[ \text{yātonṯu mahārājiniyōgam }]\text{RC} \text{ [ atu a-vāṇam ]CC} \text{ [ what.NEUT maharaja-order ]RC [ that.NEUT in-that-manner ]CC} \]

“What is the king’s order, (let) that (be done) in that manner.” (cited from Pillai 1973: 165)  

[Old Malayalam]

Also lacking in post-relative clause particles are Old Kannada (Hock 2008), and a number of modern “northern” Dravidian languages (Pengo, Kuvi, Kolami, Parji, Kurukh), on which see Hock (1988, 1989b, 2008). Hock (2008) also notes that even in modern Malayalam the post-relative clause -oo is optional (cf. Asher & Kumari 1997: 53).

However, Hock (p.c.) points to the appearance of -oo in Old Tamil in example (57) where it seems to form an indefinite or generalising pronoun, so it would seem that Dravidian -oo from an early stage begins to appear with non-interrogative functions.

(57)  

\[ \text{e-nāl-oo . . . ni celatu a-nāl konṭū îrakkum ival . . .} \text{ which-day-oo . . . you go.NONPAST.NOM that-day from die.NONPAST.3SG.NOM she . . . uyir-ē life} \]

“On which day you will go, from that day (onwards) her life will die.” (Kalittokai 5.18-19, 24Perhaps sera se bo yam dese]kae mā bæli could be more idiomatically rendered as “she stole a glance in my direction”.

18
5 Conclusions

It is tempting to view the development of relative-correlative constructions involving Q-particles in both Sinhala and Dravidian as representing convergence\textsuperscript{25}, with changes in both Dravidian and Sinhala resulting in similar structures. Phenomena of this sort are far from unknown in South Asia: other examples of convergent developments in South Asia include SOV as an unmarked word order, the use of converbs where other languages would employ dependent or co-ordinate clauses, and a phonemic contrast between dental and retroflex consonants, on which see Hock (1991: 491–512, esp. 498–504) and Hock & Joseph (1996/2009: 370–391, esp. 374–377, 383–389).

However, the use of \textit{–oo} in relative-correlative constructions appears to date to an early period in Dravidian, which precedes the appearance of \textit{da} in relative clauses (or indefinites) in Sinhala; see the Old Tamil example in (57) above, as well as the remark by Krishnamurti (2003: 419) that “all uses of –ō in Modern Telugu were already there in the inscriptive and literary varieties beginning from the seventh century”, and, in addition, the fact that structures of this type are widespread in modern Southern and South Central Dravidian languages. These facts would suggest that the appearance of \textit{da} in Sinhala relative-correlative constructions in the Classical period (12\textsuperscript{th}–15\textsuperscript{th} c. A.D.) likely reflects Dravidian influence.\textsuperscript{26}

In summary, the Sinhala Q-particle \textit{da}/\textit{də} originates from the Sanskrit alternative question con-jointer \textit{utāho}, which in Sinhala was extended into other interrogative contexts from an early period—see Table 2 above. In Classical Sinhala (as well as in modern literary Sinhala), \textit{da} appears also in the formation of relative-correlative constructions. This parallels the use of the Dravidian Q-particle \textit{–oo}, which is also employed in the formation of interrogatives, relative clauses, and indefinites, and thus the distribution of \textit{da}/\textit{də} in Sinhala apparently at least in part reflects the influence of Dravidian. That is, the use of \textit{–oo} in Dravidian in relative clauses appears to pre-date the appearance of \textit{da} in relative clauses in Sinhala, and clearly pre-dates the appearance of Q-particles in the formation of indefinites in Sinhala.\textsuperscript{27}

There remain a number of issues yet to be more fully explored regarding the relationship between Q-particles and the formation of relative clauses. In particular, the distribution of the particle \textit{–oo} in early Dravidian requires additional investigation.

References


\textsuperscript{25}With later divergence of Sinhala in the modern period.

\textsuperscript{26}Thanks to Hans Henrich Hock for helpful discussion on these points.

\textsuperscript{27}\textit{Də} does not appear in indefinites until modern colloquial Sinhala; the particle \textit{bō}, which appears to be a precursor of modern colloquial Sinhala \textit{hari}, appears in the formation of indefinites only from modern literary Sinhala; see Slade (2011).


