

Morphological Patterns of Imperative Constructions in the Sigiri Graffiti

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Abstract

The Sigiriya Graffiti represent one of the most valuable epigraphic sources for the study of early Sinhala language and literature. Composed by visitors to Sigiriya mostly during the 8th, 9th, and 10th centuries CE, these graffiti preserve important linguistic features of medieval Sinhala while also reflecting elements inherited from earlier stages of the language. This study aims to conduct a detailed morphological analysis of imperative verbs found in the Sigiri Graffiti. Focusing on both structural formation and inflectional patterns, the research examines how imperative verbs are constructed and how number distinctions and person markers are expressed. The study identifies three principle methods of imperative formation in the Sigiri graffiti: vowel alternation in verb roots, the use of suffixes, and the use of bare verb roots. It examines the systematic application of suffixes such as -wə, -gə, -hi, -hu, -n, -nu, -pan, -ju, -wu, -mu, and -Ø, and analyses their role in marking number and person distinctions. Particular attention is given to singular

and plural inflection, as well as to instances in which imperative meaning is conveyed solely through the verb root, with number interpreted through syntactic context. The research adopts a qualitative methodology. The primary source of data is Sigiri Graffiti (1956) by Senarat Paranavitana. Additional theoretical support is drawn from Sinhala grammars, linguistic studies, and relevant academic research. Data were extracted from the primary text and analysed within a morphological framework, with attention to structural patterns, inflectional variation, and historical development. The findings indicate that imperative verbs in the Sigiri Graffiti exhibit both structured morphological patterns and distinctive historical features. While many characteristics align with forms found in contemporary Sinhala, the study also reveals evolutionary traits that illuminate the diachronic development of Sinhala imperative morphology. Accordingly, this research contributes to a clearer understanding of the formation, inflection, and historical continuity of imperative verbs in Sinhala.

Keywords: Imperative verbs, Inflection, Morphology, Sigiri Graffiti, Suffixation

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1. Introduction

The period from the 7th to the 8th centuries CE to the mid-13th century CE is considered the Medieval Period of Sinhala. This era represents a significant stage in the evolution of the Sinhala language. It was a transitional phase during which many distinctive linguistic features emerged, gradually moving away from earlier Prakrit characteristics (ප්‍රේමානන්ද, 2004). In studying the linguistic features of this period, the Sigiri graffiti serve as an invaluable source of evidence.

Dating from the 8th, 9th, and 10th centuries CE, the Sigiri graffiti mainly exhibit the reflections on the frescoes and the surrounding landscape inscribed on the Mirror Wall by visitors from all over the country. Accordingly, Paranavitana (1956) has identified that there are approximately 685 graffiti written in Sinhala on the Sigiriya mirror wall. These graffiti reveal valuable information on the Sinhala language style, vocabulary and grammatical features. In particular, as many scholars speculate, these Sigiri graffiti were composed by people who came to see it from different regions of Sri Lanka during those periods. Consequently, regional dialectal variations of Sinhala prevalent during the medieval period are preserved in these graffiti.

While much contemporary literature of the period is religious in nature, the Sigiri graffiti represent a unique literary element that portrayed various social and cultural aspects. The language contained in the Sigiri graffiti provides

an important documentary record in the study of the folk literature, folk consciousness and social life of that time. The value of these sources is immense as a written record containing many linguistic features such as nouns, verbs and particles used in the Sinhala language at that time, that are invaluable for historical linguistic investigation. Accordingly, the present study undertakes a focused examination of imperative verb constructions in the Sigiri graffiti, with particular attention to morphological structure.

2. Literature Review

In order to analyse conditional verb forms, it is necessary to understand the nature of verbs and their inflectional patterns in Sinhala. The *Sidath Sangarā* defines action as “*nodæw nuguṇa dæw nisa: sakæruṇen da: muwə wæ sidu kirijə nam*” (ධර්මාරාම, 1947). Based on this definition, Dissanayake (2001) identifies five characteristics of verbs that define the grammatical nature of verbs:

Action is not material. (nodæw)

Action is not abstract. (nuguṇa)

Action arises from material entities. (dæw nisa:)

Action is associated with six *kāraḥas* (modes). (sakæruṇen)

Action is realised through verb roots. (da: muwə wæ) (කරුණාකීර්ති, 2001)

According to W.S. Karunathilaka, the verb is the central word used in the predicate of a sentence and is based on its root form. In written Sinhala, verbs

are inflected for grammatical features such as person, word and tense. He classifies verbs broadly into finite and non-finite forms. As imperative verbs independently complete the meaning of a sentence, they belong to the finite category. Imperative verbs are action words used to issue commands, orders, instructions, or direct requests. The inflection of imperative verbs generally occurs in the second person in Sinhala (කරුණාතිලක, 2014).

In the formation of imperative verbs, the singular form shows several morphological changes. In verb roots ending in -i, the final -i is replaced by -u, and in verb roots ending in -e, the final -e is alternatively replaced by -ijə. Similarly, in the verb roots ending in -a, -a:, and -i, the suffix -pan is added to form the singular form. E.g., *balə* > *baləpan/ bala:pan* (look), *ka:* > *ka:pan* (eat), *baḍi* > *bæḍəpan* (tie). In the formation of plural imperatives, the suffix -la: is added to the verb roots (with variants such as -n, -la:, and -lla:). For example: *baləpalla:* (look), *bæḍəpalla:* (tie). Further, imperative verb forms are also formed through the prefixation of the ending vowel of the verb root, and through the replacement of the final -i with -a, accompanied by the addition of the suffix -pijə. For example: *baḍi* > *bæḍə* > *bæḍəpijə* (tie) (කරුණාතිලක, 2014).

Kumaratunga Munidasa, in *Kriyā Vivaranaya* (2022), identifies the imperative verb as *Vidānākhyātaya* (imperative mood). He states that the five suffixes mentioned in Sidath Saḡarā— -a, -annē, -annæ, -awu, -u

— are associated with the formation of imperative verbs. Verb roots *balə* (look), *bamə* (circle round), *labə* (receive) are formed with the suffix -a, while -annē, -annæ, are not considered true suffixes; rather, they are identified as verbal nouns. As Munidasa (2022) observes, imperative forms may express both affection and resentment. When used affectionately, the emotional nuance must be taken into account. Hence, verbal noun forms such as -annē and -annæ are employed to convey the intended emotional tone.

In the verb *balawu* (look), the second person plural form suffix is applied, while -ha is replaced by -wa. It is argued that the -awu occurring here should not be identified as an independent imperative suffix. He considers -u as the true imperative suffix in such cases and indicates it as a change in the second person predicate rather than the addition of a distinct imperative suffix (මුනිදාස, 2022).

Gunasekara (2008), in his book *A Comprehensive Grammar of the Sinhalese Language*, defines the imperative mood as an action that expresses a command, request, or advice. Examples include words like *varen* (come), *di:pan* (give), *kərawu* (do). He further argues that the imperative is mainly used in the first and second persons. As Gunasekara notes, an imperative sense is also expressed through optative expressions such as *a:ju bo: van* and *særəde:* (may you live long). Similarly, in spoken language, the imperative sense is expressed through expressions like *vejan* (be), *paləjan* (go)

and gija:we (let go), sitija:we (let be). In these constructions, two suffixes are used, namely -we and -t, and when the suffix -t occurs, it is preceded by the derivational suffix -pu-, resulting in forms such as kərəpuwa:we (let [him/her] do) and kərəpuwa:wet. Gunasekara (2008) also observes that the imperative meaning can be expressed through first-person verb forms, such as nida:gamu (let us sleep), and yamu (let us go).

Kumara (2003), in his study of the verbs and nouns of the *Dhampiyā Atuvā Gatapada*, examines verbal morphology in relation to early Sinhala texts. He observes that the singular imperative form often consists solely of the bare verb root, whereas the plural imperative form is formed by adding the suffixes -wa, -w and -wu. He further notes that the singular imperative forms vary according to the three verb stem categories (-a, -i, and -e). Imperatives belonging to the -a category typically end in -a or -a:. In such cases, sometimes the -a stem itself functions directly as an imperative, which is identified as a common feature of the *Dhampiyā Atuvā Gatapada*. Verb roots in the -i category have the endings -a or -u, while imperative forms derived from -e verb roots are rare in the *Dhampiyā Atuvā Gatapada*. The plural imperative verb forms formed by the endings -wa, -w and -wu frequently occur in the text. He further notes that Sinhala infinitives, present participles and negative imperative forms are also used in this work (කිසිසකුමාර, 2003).

In reviewing the research on the verbs in contemporary works, Weerwardena

(2012) presents an in-depth linguistic analysis of the verbs in *Butsarana*. She states that the imperative suffixes used in *Butsarana* are -ga, -wa and -Ø in the singular, and -wu in the plural. In addition, it is noted that in the formation of the imperative verbs in *Butsarana*, the ending vowel of the verb root frequently appears in its long form, which is identified as a characteristic feature of imperative formation in the text. (වීරවර්ධන, 2003)

Vilpatha Dhammasena Thero (1982), who presents a detailed analysis of the verbs in *Amāvatura*, points out how the imperative verbs are formed in this work by using the suffix -ga in the singular and the suffix -wa in the plural. He further notes that imperatives in *Amāvatura* are formed through the lengthening of the root-final vowel and through the use of zero suffix (ධම්මසේන, 1982).

Accordingly, it is evident that many scholars have examined and described the formation and usage of imperative verbs in Sinhala that come under the broader category of finite verbs. However, despite these contributions, a specific and comprehensive study of imperative verb forms in ancient Sinhala—as evidenced in the Sigiri graffiti—remains limited. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this research gap by systematically analysing the imperative verbs attested in the Sigiri graffiti.

3. Research Objective

The primary objective of this study is to conduct a morphological analysis of the structural forms of imperative verbs

found in the Sigiriya graffiti dating from the 8th, 9th, and 10th centuries CE, in order to examine their contribution to the diachronic development of Sinhala imperative morphology.

4. Research Problem

The central research problem of this study is to identify and analyse the morphological patterns and structural characteristics of imperative verbs attested in the Sigiriya graffiti of the 8th–10th centuries CE, and to clarify their role in the historical development of Sinhala imperative morphology.

5. Research Methodology

This study is based on a qualitative descriptive research methodology and relies primarily on secondary sources, specifically the *Sigiri Graffiti* (1956) by Senarath Paranavithana. In addition to this main source, relevant linguistic studies and grammar texts on the Sinhala language were consulted to establish the theoretical framework necessary for the analysis.

A database was compiled from the verbs attested across the 685 graffiti in the Sigiriya collection, from which 61 distinct verb roots were identified. These roots appear in various morphological forms across 106 specific instances. To extract these imperative forms, the study applied two identification criteria: the semantic meaning, where an imperative sense is clearly conveyed, and the presence of specific suffixes. Under the approach of thematic analysis, each identified imperative verb was broken down into its constituent root and suffix

and subsequently classified under the suffixes employed.

This method allowed the study to focus on several key aspects, including the identification of phonetic alternations in the verb roots, the gradual formation of imperative verbs through suffixation, and the use of prepositions or other affixes to express imperative meanings. Accordingly, the study investigates the structural and distinctive morphological features in the formation of imperative verbs as preserved in the Sigiri graffiti.

6. Data Analysis and Discussion

As noted above, imperative verbs are action words used to issue commands, orders, instructions, or direct requests. Accordingly, this study focuses on two main aspects of imperative verbs used in Sigiri graffiti: the structure of imperative verbs and the formation of imperative verbs.

6.1 Structure of Imperative Verbs

In analysing the structural features of imperative verbs revealed in Sigiri graffiti through a linguistic perspective, it is observed that some imperative verbs in contemporary Sinhala are formed by the vowel prefixation and the alternation of vowel phonemes in verb roots. Accordingly, the phonemic alternations that have occurred in certain verb roots in the formation of modal verbs are shown as follows.

Root	Morpheme Formation	Phonemic Alteration
siṭə	siṭu (be)	ə > u
naɡə	næɡə (get on)	ɑ > æ

jan	janu / jan (know)	Ø > u	written	by those going away
dak	daku (see)	Ø > u	waju	- tipə wahəji awujini maji [əgə waju (096) Hey! Come speedily and stand by my side.
hiḍi	hiḍu (stay)	i > u		
si	se (smile)	i > e		
we	wa (be)	e > a	jan	- ek əjut topə amətəji jan (235)
kijə	ki:jə (say)	i > i:		

In the formation of imperative verb forms of certain verb roots attested in Sigiri graffiti, various vowel alternations occur in the first and second syllables of the verb roots. There, the final closed vowel sound ə of the verb roots ending with -ə has alternated to -u and -a in some cases. Furthermore, the short vowel of the first syllable of some verb roots ending with -ə has lengthened to a long vowel. In certain verb roots ending in pure consonants -Ø, the final consonant has alternated to -u. The phoneme -i of the verb roots ending with -i has alternated to -u and -e in some instances. Similarly, in certain verb roots, the ending -e of has alternated to -a.

Example:

nosiṭuju	-	sisə: sisə: duduḷə sela:təhi əḍədərəhi nosiṭuju (096) Stand not on the edge of the rock, wandering about the fortress.
nægəgan	-	nægəgan sihigiri (169) Ascend Sihigiri thyself
janu	-	janu janujun me li: mahawan (035) Know that this has been

Know that one has come here and addresses you

According to the data set used for this study, the formation of imperative verbs in the Sigiri graffiti demonstrates that, similar to contemporary Sinhala, imperative verbs are formed through the use of various suffixes. As noted above, vowel prefixation and alternation of vowel phonemes occur in the verb roots prior to the addition of these suffixes. Accordingly, the formal patterns in which the imperative verbs have been formed can be categorised as follows:

- Use of suffixes – Imperative verbs formed by adding specific suffixes to the verb root.
- Use of the bare verb root – Imperative verbs expressed directly by the bare verb root without additional suffixes.

6.1.1 Use of Suffixes

In modern written and spoken Sinhala, imperative verbs are expressed through the use of various suffixes and prepositions. Similarly, the suffixes used to form imperative verbs in Sigiri graffiti can be listed as follows;

- -ju
- -wə, -wu

- -gə
- -hi, -hu
- -n, -nə
- -pan
- -nu

These suffixes indicate that imperative formation in early Sinhala involved both morphological marking and syntactic interpretation, rather than strictly grammaticalized number marking.

6.1.1.1 Use of the Suffix *-ju*

These imperative forms are formed by adding the suffix *-ju* after the verb root. In some cases, a *-wa-* has been inserted between the verb root and the *-ju* suffix.

Imperative Verb Formation Poem

baləju (look)	balə + ju	071
a ju (come)	a + ju	100
kiju (say)	ki + ju	100
piriksəju (inspect)	piriksə + ju	057/ 118
nobandwaju (don'twrite)	no + band + wa + ju	285
rukurəju (outstreich)	rukurə + ju	337

Among the imperative verb suffixes attested in Sigiri graffiti, the suffix *-ju* can be pointed out as a particularly prominent and recognisable form. This suffix appears in several grammatical contexts related to verbs. The following examples illustrate its usage.

Present tense – second person – plural sense

baṇəju - baṇəwatə no me baṇəju
girihihi naṭbitə wasənen (071)

As they reside on a ruined wall on the summit of the rock, speak not even though they speak

Present participial

hejuju - hindi me sit hejuju himambin
wi: taban dano (008)

Lay these who stood were ladies who attracted one's heart

Optative mood

wasəju - wasəju jehe jeta du jannəjun
lasə ji daktu (605)

Even though they say 'remain in happiness' and even when knowing people see it as a matter for caution...

This *-ju* suffix has also been used to express the imperative meanings in Sigiri graffiti.

baləju - e no baləju jaha jamhə
ranəwanə baṭṭanə (071)

Do not look at that. Let us go away, rejecting the golden-coloured one whose breasts are dropped down.

- nujunə lajə gəhəni lijə tupə no baləju
(243)

Though you are getting down after having seen the ladies, look at them again

- awu ju baləju himəbijækə galbejandə
wusu (335)

Come and look at a lady who remained on the rocky mountainside.

aju - aju kiju ajhi dighi maj no mand
wannat (100)

Come and speak. Is it not to become
small that you came my way?

kiju - aju kiju ajhi dighi maj no mand
wannat (100)

Come and speak. Is it not to become
small that you came my way?

piriksəju - mi: janə tabaji sikisand
kumak kijənej piriksəju (057)

Let my esteemed friend investigate
what should be said to those men...

6.1.1.2 Use of the Suffixes *-wa* and *-wu*

Of these two suffixes, the suffix *-wa* expresses the singular and the suffix *-wu* expresses the plural. As indicated in the Kriyā Vivaranaya (uqksodi" 2022), these two suffixes represent the second person singular and plural forms. In the Sigiri poem, both suffixes are used in the imperative sense. In particular, among the following words, the word 'kelimuwə' (dally) is a case where the imperative sense appears in the first-person plural. The sense conveyed here is that of a command or exhortation directed to a group that includes the speaker. However, some scholars argue that such forms should not be strictly classified as imperatives, since nobody directs commands at themselves. Nevertheless, Gunasekara (2008) notes that such words are used in giving commands with a persuasive or hortative sense. Accordingly, this command used in verse 145 of the Sigiri graffiti can be interpreted as hortative in nature. From the above example, it

is evident that in addition to the second person forms, imperative verbs in ancient Sinhala were also used in first person plural forms.

Imperative Verb Formation Poem

kijawə(say)	kijə + wə	390/ 623/ 631
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hadəhawə (cause to have faith)		
hadəha + wə		134

sandewə (give a signal)		
sande + wə		137

kelimuwə (dally)	kelī + mu + wə	
		145

paharəwu (exhibit)		
paharə + wu		339

Example: kijəwa - are: tuṭ no wi
kijəwa (390)

Sirrah! (Dare to) say that (you were) not
pleased!

- kijəwa sənəsennak. no
kijəwa no sənəsennak (623)

Say something by which one becomes
consoled. Say not anything by which
one does not become consoled.

- a nija: kijəwa (631) Do tell me the
manner in which he came

hadəhawə- piri bun paga: maləjunə
diw oṭə kijə kijaji hadəhawə (134)

Cause her, whose courage is shattered
and whose tongue and lips are dried, to
have faith

sandewa - nægi: sandewa (137)

Ascend the rock and give a signal

keljimuwa-mun [adun apə at pat kəraj
no tor wə keljimuwa (145)

Having made these young damsels
come to our hands, let us dally with
them incessantly.

paharəwu - sitəwæʈi paharəwu (339)

Let the state of your mind be exhibited.

6.1.1.3 Use of the Suffixes - gə

The use of the suffix -gə after the verb root is a prominent feature in Sigiri graffiti. However, in some cases, this suffix has been applied to verb roots that have undergone phonemic alternations prior to suffixation. As Senarath Paranavithana and Sidath Sangrā (writer) point out, this suffix was used in ancient Sinhala to give respectful commands. As (Piyasili) Wijemanne (2016) points out, the -ga ending form is used as a humble command. She states that this occurrence is more common in the works of Vesathuru Dā Sanna than in the works of Gurulugomi and Butsarana. Thus, it is evident that the suffix -ga historically functioned as a marker of respect and humility in imperative verbs. However, it is noteworthy that in the Sigiri graffiti, the usage of this suffix appears to be semantically broader, as it is used to indicate both affection and resentment. In Sigiri Poem No. 610, it is used to express the sense of respect, whereas in Poem No. 643, it appears in a command uttered in great anger. Thus, it is evident that in the ancient Sinhala language, the suffix -ga was used to convey both affection and resentment

depending on the context.

Imperative Verb Formation Poem

kijəgə (tell) kijə + gə 610

dahagə (discard) dāha + gə 643

ḡahagə (abandon) ḡaha + gə 169

Example: kijəgə - ikisandə kijəgə
(610)

O esteemed friend, do tell me this.

dahagə - dahagə. naminə a:jujun wi: ḡu
ka: kiju wi: (643)

Discard them! By whom has this been
said, even though having become “those
who came” by mere name?

ḡahagə - me sitiwili ḡahagə (169)

Abandon these melancholy thoughts

6.1.1.4 Use of the Suffixes -hi and -hu

Instances where the suffixes -hi and -hu are added to the verb root are also attested in the Sigiri graffiti. These suffixes frequently occur in combination with the prefix "no-". Imperative verb forms marked with -hi and -hu convey meanings similar to those expressed by the suffixes -wə and -wu (e.g., balawə, balawu). However, their precise function, whether they are used as imperative forms or as second person singular or plural forms, depends on the syntactic and contextual environment in which they appear.

Imperative Verb Formation Poem

nobaləhi (don't look) no + balə + hi
38

no siṭihu (don't stay) no + siṭi + hu 506

Example: no baləhi - no baləhi. janə
maḷə da daḷəsabəwə wi balə datiwī a
(038) Look not (at her). By looking (at
her), it has been kown (by me) that (she
remains) to be of a hard nature even if
people are dead.

no siṭihu - a janə kalə no siṭihu (506)

Do not stay when I come

6.1.1.5 Use of the Suffixes -n

The suffix -n is directly attached to the
verb root to form imperative verbs. Some
instances indicate negative imperative
constructions in combination with the
negative prefix no-.

Imperative Verb Formation Poem

no kijan (do not recite)
no + kija + n

125

nægəgan (ascend) nægə + ga + n
169

balan (behold) bala + n 014/125

taban (lay aside) taba + n 008

basin (get down) basi + n 267

dakwan (present) dakwa + n 039

no jan (do not go) no + ja + n 038

asan (listen) asa + n 629

sanəsan (console) sanəsa + n 400

Example: no kijan - me dignet balan. gi:
no kijan (125)

Look at this long-eyed one, but do not
recite songs

nægəgan - sihigiri nægəgan (169)

Ascend Sihigiri thyself

balan - siki balan bejandhi himijəbi
(014)

Behold, my friend, the lady on the
mountainside...

taban - dano, me himambin sit hejuju:
wi: sit taban (008)

O men, lay aside the idea that these who
stood here were ladies who attracted
one's heart

basin - basin, ekni ek se we tamə
mejwetə etə (267)

Do get down. When one comes near this
thinking that, one may become united
with one...

dakwan - keljjen me biṇu: wat æti sæṭi
mej dakwan (039)

Though this has been spoken in jest, do
present this matter even as it really is.

no jan - asəṛətə girihiṣə no jan (038)

Do not go to the summit of the rock for
her company

asan - siki, asan. mehi mindibijan
jæhæ jat (629)

Listen to it, O friend. When he goes

away, having given up the disdainful ones...

sanəsan - anobə siṭi enəjun awə tama:
sit dæn sanəsan (400)

Console your heart now when those
who come and who stood elsewhere are
coming

6.1.1.6 Use of the Suffixes -pan

This formation is attested only in poem number 465 (e.g., seḷen eḷəpan siṭə taṭə pirihi: giṭə kiṭa: kulə), which belongs to the latter half of the 8th century CE. In present-day, Sinhala forms with the suffix -pan are commonly used, such as baləpan, ka:pan, bi:pan, and naṭəpan. Nevertheless, it is difficult to determine with certainty whether forms with this suffix in old Sinhala were used in spoken or written usage. However, the occurrence of this suffix in Sigiri graffiti is significant as it provides evidence for tracing the historical evolution of -pan forms, which are widely evident in present-day Sinhala to convey imperative meaning.

Imperative Verb Formation Poem

eḷəpan (direct) eḷə + pan 465

Example: eḷəpan - kulə pirihi: giṭə
kiṭa: taṭə siṭə seḷen eḷəpan (465)

Direct his mind to you, having said that,
this family has become extinct

6.1.1.7 Use of the Suffixes -nu

This suffix is also attested following the verb root and expresses imperative meanings in Sigiri graffiti. In certain instances, the derivational suffix -va-

occurs between the verb root and -nu, indicating a layered morphological formation in the construction of the imperative form.

Imperative Verb Formation Poem

lanu (place) la + nu 221

rukurəwənu (make) rukurə + wə + nu
320

eḷəwənu (throw) eḷə + wə + nu 458

Example: lanu - wisitur paṭ wærællek
baləṭ lanu (221)

Place a beautiful silken cloth in the hand
of the long-eyed one

rukurəwənu - de at waṭə paḷə maj ru
suk rukurəwənu (320)

Make my beauty manifested round
about the two hands, your pleasure

eḷəwənu - me beṭədahi ranwanun atəre
nilupulə eḷəwanu (458)

Throw a blue lotus in the midst of
the golden-coloured ones on this
mountainside.

6.1.2 Use of the Bare Verb Root - Ø

The use of the bare verb root to indicate imperative meaning is a common feature in both ancient and modern Sinhala. In examining the verb roots attested in the Sigiri graffiti, it is evident that imperative meaning is often expressed through the simple use of the verb root without additional suffixes. Moreover, various vowel alternations in the verb root have also contributed to the formation of imperative verbs.

Imperative Verb Formation Poem

no kijə (say not) no kijə 155/ 236

ki:jə / kijə (say) ki:jə/ kijə 370/ 379/
423/ 463/ 468/ 531/ 608

balə (look) balə 21/ 24/
45/ 180/ 182/ 208/ 223/ 257/ 277/ 301/
354/ 367/ 438/ 454/ 455/ 456/ 504/ 561/
593/ 631/ 640/ 641/ 667

jan (know) jan 235

daku (see) daku 376

hiḍu (remain) hiḍu 234

basu (get down) basu 677

magə (observe) magə 282

Example: no kijə - e kiwəju taman
munəṭə taṭə taṭə wajjan no kijə (155)

Though said by him, say you not hard
words to these women.

balə - e digə nujunə laji tamə baləmini
siṭi janənə balə (024)

Do cast your long eyes and look at the
people who stand looking at them.

jan - ek ajun topə amətaji jan (235)

Know that one has come here and
addresses you.

daku - ojun laju dækə mehi jehen wisu
newesun ja daku (376)

Having seen them, indeed, see also the
mansion in which they lived happily
here.

hiḍu - mə sabəḍə sihigiri hiḍu (234)

O my friend, do remain in Sihigiri

basu - atin me nomaḍimin basu (677)

Do get down without rubbing this with
your hands.

magə - noba: ma: iḡ maḡə (282)

Observe my waist without being
frightened.

6.2 Inflection of Imperative Verbs

Imperative verbs in Sinhala typically convey commands, requests, or exhortations and are primarily associated with second-person reference. However, a first-person imperative usage is evident in verse 145 in the Sigiri graffiti. The suffix combinations used in the Sigiri graffiti to express these imperative forms can be presented as follows,

Singular

Plural

Suffix Verb

Suffix Verb

-wə kijəwə (say) / dakuwə (see)

-wu paharəwu
(exhibit)

-gə kijəgə (tell)

- -

-hi baləhi (see)-

hu siṭihu (stay)

-nu janu (know)

- -

-n balan (see)-

n dakwan (present)

-pan eḷəpan (direct)-

mu
keḷimuwə (dally)

-Ø balə / daku (see) -ju baləju (look)

/ aju (come)

A distinction in number can be observed in the suffixes used in the inflection of imperative verbs used in Sigiri graffiti. In the singular, the suffixes -wə, -gə, -hi, -hu, -nu, -n, -pan, and -Ø are attested, while in the plural, the suffixes -wu, -hu, -n, -mu, and -ju occur. Even though it is noted that these words are widely associated with the second person singular and plural, they have sometimes been used in first person plural, as evidenced in poem number 145 in the form *kelimuwa* (dally).

The imperative forms marked with the suffix -n occur frequently in Sigiri graffiti. This suffix is commonly used in the singular and, in certain contexts, also appears in the plural. Poem No. 008 can be cited as an example (*hindi me sit hejuju himambin wi: taban dano*). The imperative form *sit taban* conveys a command addressed to a large group of people.

Imperative forms consisting solely of the bare verb root are widely seen in Sigiri graffiti. The number distinction in such cases is not marked on the verb itself but is determined by the syntactic context. If the subject in a sentence is plural, the bare verb root is interpreted as conveying plural imperative meaning.

6.2.1 Singular Imperative Forms

Examples of imperative forms used in the singular are presented below.

-wə-are: *tut no wi kijəwa* (390)

Sirrah! (Dare to) say that (you were) not pleased!

-piri bun paga: *maləjunə diw oṭə kijə*

kijaji hadəhawə (134)

Do thou cause her, whose courage is shattered and whose tongue and lips are dried, to have faith

-ju - e no *baləju jaha jamhə ranəwanə baṭtanə* (071)

Do not look at that. Let us go away, rejecting the golden-coloured one whose breasts are dropped down.

- nujunə *lajə gəhəni lijə tupə no baləju* (243)

Though you are getting down after having seen the ladies, look at them again

-gə - *sikisandə kijəgə*. (610)

O esteemed friend, do tell me this.

- dahagə. *naminə a:jujun wi: ju ka: kiju wi:* (643)

Discard them! By whom has this been said, even though having become “those who came” by mere name?

-hi - no *baləhi. janə maḷə da daḷəsabəwə wi balə datiwi a* (038)

Look not (at her). By looking (at her), it has been known (by me) that (she remains) to be of a hard nature even if people are dead.

-nu - de at *waṭə paḷə maj ru suk rukurəwənu* (320)

Make my beauty manifested round about the two hands, your pleasure

- me *bejədahi ranwanun atəre nilupulə eḷəwanu* (458)

Throw a blue lotus in the midst of the golden-coloured ones on this mountainside

-n - siki balan bejandhi himijəbi (014)

Behold, my friend, the lady on the mountainside...

- siki, asan. mehi mindibijan jəhæ jat (629)

Listen to it, O friend. When he goes away, having given up the disdainful ones...

-pan - kulə pirihi: gijə kija: tatə sitə se[ɛn e]əpan (465)

Direct his mind to you, having said that, this family has become extinct

- Ø - mə sabəðə sihigiri hiðu (234)

O my friend, do remain in Sihigiri

These examples clearly demonstrate that the inflected forms marked with the aforementioned suffixes in the Sigiri verses are used to convey singular imperative meaning.

6.2.2. Plural Imperative Forms

Examples of imperative forms used in the plural are presented below.

-wu - sitəwəti paharəwu (339)

Let the state of your mind be exhibited.

-hu - a janə kalə no siṭihu (506)

Do not stay when I come.

-n - dano, me himambin sit hejuju: wi: sit taban (008)

O men, lay aside the idea that these who stood here were ladies who attracted one's heart

-ju - nujunə lajə gəhæni lijə tupə no baləju (243)

Though you are getting down after having seen the ladies, look at them again

These examples further illustrate that a distinction of number is observable among the imperative verbs attested in the Sigiri graffiti.

7. Conclusion

According to the findings above, this study demonstrates that multiple methods have been employed to form imperative verbs in the medieval period of Sinhala. The study primarily focused on two aspects of imperative verbs: the structural features and the inflectional patterns.

When examining the structural features of imperative verbs in Sigiri graffiti, it is noted that the imperative verbs in contemporary Sinhala are formed through the following methods;

- Vowel alternation
- Use of suffixes
- Use of bare verb roots.

As discussed, the formation of imperative verbs in Sigiri graffiti often involved the alternation and assimilation of the final vowel of the verb roots. Suffixation has occurred in a systematic manner in forming the imperative forms in these eras with the use of the suffixes

-ju, -wə, -wu, -gə, -hi, -hu, -n, -nə, -pan, -nu, -mu, and -Ø. In some instances, the suffix has been directly attached to the verb root, while in others, changes in the verb root have occurred as part of the formation process.

In terms of the inflection, the imperative verbs in Sigiri graffiti are inflected in the second person, marked for singular and plural. In the case of singular imperatives, -wə, -gə, -hi, -n, -pan, -nu, and -Ø suffixes are attested, while in the plural imperatives -ju, -wu, -hu, -n, and -Ø suffixes are attested. The suffix -mu is used to mark the first person plural imperative. It is also noteworthy that some imperatives are used in both singular and plural forms.

Another unique feature of expressing imperative forms in Sigiri graffiti is the use of the bare verb root. These are used in both singular and plural forms. In determining the number distinction of such instances, the syntactic and semantic context, focusing on the entire sentence, particularly the singular or plural nature of the subject in the sentence, should be taken into consideration.

Overall, this study identifies numerous distinctive features of imperative verbs in the Sigiri graffiti. While many forms correspond to patterns found in contemporary Sinhala literature, several unique features also emerge, offering insights into both the historical development of imperative constructions and broader evolutionary aspects of the Sinhala language.

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