



## EKTĀNA

### THE SUPREME COUNCIL IN THE EARLY MEDIÉVAL SINHALESE ADMINISTRATION

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*Ektān-Samiya* is a term which occurs in most of the Sinhala pillar inscriptions of the ninth and tenth centuries. It is also referred to as *ektān-samiya* in one or two inscriptions. We come across this term for the first time in a slab-inscription dated in the seventeenth regnal year of Sena II (853-887), discovered at a place named Kehelpota in the Badulla district.<sup>1</sup> Next it appears in an unpublished pillar inscription discovered at *Nāccadūva*, near Anurādhapura, dated in the thirty-second regnal year of the same king.<sup>2</sup> It does not occur in any of the so far discovered *attāni* pillars of Sena I (833-853), during whose reign the practice of granting immunities in respect of institutions, estates and villages by *attāni* pillars seems to have been initiated. It is also absent in all the ten *attāni* pillars, so far discovered, belonging to the reign of Udaya II (887-898), the successor of Sena II, but re-appears in the inscriptions of Kassapa IV, the immediate successor of Udaya II<sup>3</sup>, and continues to occur in most of the *attāni* pillar inscriptions till the end of the Anurādhapura period. It occurs also in one of the inscriptions of the Polonnaruva period as *ektān-samiya*.<sup>4</sup> This term has been translated differently by different scholars. Wickremasinghe translates it as 'the Council', 'the Supreme Council' or 'His Majesty in Council', for he thinks that '*ektān*', the first part of the compound '*ektān-samiya*', may be a derivative of Skt. '*eka-sthāna*', 'the one (or the Supreme) Assembly', as distinct from other assemblies.<sup>5</sup> Godakumbura, who seems to have agreed with the interpretation of Wickremasinghe, renders it as the 'Assembly' or 'the Council of State', and gives its literal meaning as 'where they have gathered together'.<sup>6</sup> According to Paranavitana *ektān-samiya* does not mean 'the Council', it is a phrase with the meaning of 'with the unanimous assent'.<sup>7</sup> We may partly agree with Wickremasinghe's interpretation, but not with that of Paranavitana; for a careful examination of this word as it appears in the inscriptions of the ninth and tenth centuries shows that this meaning does not suit the context of most of the passages where it has occurred.

1. *Silāliipi Saṅgrahaṇa* (SS.) Vol. II pp. 49-50

2. *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, Inscription Register (ASCIR)* No. M9

3. *EZ.* Vol. I, p. 304; *EZ.* Vol. III, pp. 103-104; *EZ.* Vol. V, pp. 351, 361

4. *EZ.* Vol. II, p. 214

5. *EZ.* Vol. I, p. 290, n. 2; *EZ.* Vol. II, pp. 5, 37, 43, 48, 55

6. *EZ.* Vol. V, pp. 352, 353, 362, 363.

7. *EZ.* Vol. III, p. 107-108