

Ātkaṇḍa Vihāra Rock Inscription

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Ātkaṇḍa Vihāra is the modern name of the site of an ancient Buddhist monastery, situated in the village of Koṭakanda, Āllepotāna in the A. G.A.'s division of Kahaṭagasdigiliya in the Kanadarā Kōralē, Nuvaragam Palāta East of the Anurādhapura District. According to an inscription found at this monastery site it is dateable to the second or third century B. C. Bell has recorded its discovery and has given an account of this site in the Seventh Progress Report of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, 1896 as follows: "Koṭakanda ('Squat hill') is an insignificant looking cluster of wooded rocks, bearing slightly east of north from Kok-ebe-kanda about one and a half to two miles in a B line, and less than a mile north-west of Elapattāva, a small Moor village....."

"The caves under the south face of this rock, the top of which forms the approach to the upper range, are more lofty than those above, and served as dwellings for the recluses of this rock monastery....."

On the top of the boulder, under which are caves No. 5 and 6, is a diminutive *dāgaba*, only 9 feet in diameter.... The only inscription, besides the one line above cave No. 1, was accidentally discovered by myself whilst exploring beyond the open cave to the right of the climb to the *dāgaba*. The letters are of the fifth to ninth century period, but the record is too broken to turn to proper account".¹

Although Bell says that there was only one inscription, 'besides the one line above cave No. 1' there are in fact, more than two on the same rock. The second inscription has been engraved by the side of the other, on its left; it is badly weather-worn and the writing, except for a few letters, is obliterated. Another inscription, which may be numbered as 3, appears below inscription No. 1, but except for four letters, *mahamaḍe*, at the beginning of the inscription the rest of the writing has disappeared. It is inscription No. 1, which is dealt with by us in this paper. A Sinhāla edition of this epigraph appears in a journal published by the Department of Archaeology,² but its editor has failed to interpret its contents fully - specially the controversial phrase '*vaherila cidavi*'. Hence no apology is required for a revised edition of this epigraph.

1. Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, Seventh Progress Report, 1896, p. 17

2. *Śilā-lipi Saṅgrahaya (SS)*, pp. 59-63

As has been already mentioned, this inscription measuring $6\frac{1}{2}$ ft. by $1\frac{1}{2}$ ft. is inscribed on natural rock, and has three lines of writing, the average size of a letter being about two inches by three and half inches. A few letters in the last line here and there, are partly obliterated; the rest of the record is in a fairly good state of preservation. The script as well as the vocabulary are of the sixth or seventh century A. D.; they are similar to dateable documents of this period. We may, however, draw attention to the words *ico* and *devaherila*, which occur here in place of *ica* and *vaherila* respectively, of other contemporary inscriptions.

The latter word occurs in a variety of orthographic forms such as *vaharala*, *vaherila*, *vaherala*, *viherala*, *vaharalaya* and *veheralaya* in the epigraphs of this period, but its exact meaning is not known yet.³ Parānavitana interprets the word *vaharala* and its variants as 'from slavery'. He derives *vaharala* from Skt. *vr̥ṣala* (P. *vasala*), and equates it with *vahal* in Sinhala, meaning 'slave'.⁴ This is most unlikely, for the general meaning of the Skt. word *vr̥ṣala* and the Pali word *vasala* is 'outcaste'. In Sinhala *vasala* is the root form and the adjectival form, and *vasalayā*, means 'an outcaste, and the two words *vasala* and *vahala* do not have the same meaning. The Sinhala word used with reference to 'slaves' during the Anurādhapura period is *das*, and not *vahal*. A second century inscription found at Ilukvāva in Anurādhapura refers to two slaves, one male and one female, assigned to a *vihāra* there as *dasa* and *dasi* respectively.⁵ The Mihintalē Tablets of Mahinda IV (956-972) have used the word *veher-dasun* with reference to the slaves attached to the *vihāras*, but not the word *veher-vahalun*.⁶ The very passage quoted from the *Samantapāsādikā* by Parānavitana in support of his interpretation of the word *vaharila* has used the word *ārāmi-kadāsa* with reference to monastery-slaves, but not the word *ārāmika-vasala*.⁷ Hence the meaning given by Parānavitana to the word *vaharala* and to its variants is open to doubt.

His interpretation of the word *cidavi* or *cidaviya* as 'freed' is also subject to objections. This word is equivalent to *chinditvā* or *chindāpetvā* in Pali, meaning 'having cut or severed' and 'caused to be cut or severed'. Later, by the ninth century, it had changed into '*siñdi*'. As has been pointed out by Parānavitana himself, 'As today, in the mediaeval inscriptions as well as in literature, forms of *siñdi* are used to denote the meaning of "breaking", "plucking" or "nipping with fingers"'.⁸ In Sinhala forms of the root '*siñd*', corresponding to Skt. *chid*, had not been used to denote the

3. EZ. Vol. IV, pp. 132 - 133, 139-140, 144; EZ. Vol. V, pp. 29, 34

4. E. Z. Vol. IV, p. 135

5. Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, Annual Report, (ASCAR) 1892, p. 10, ASCAR, 1893 p. 6 No. 101.

6. E. Z. Vol. 1, p. 93, Slab A. lines 41, 45

7. E. Z. Vol. V, p. 60

8. E. Z. Vol. V, p. 64

manumission of slaves during the Anurādhapura period. The *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* (5th century A. D.) refers to the manumission of two boys from slavery before they were admitted as novices. The word used here with reference to manumission is *bhujisse-katvā*.⁹ There is another reference in the same work to the manumission of sixteen slaves from a *vihāra* by some people. Here again the word that was used to denote their manumission is *bhujisse-akāmsu*.¹⁰ The *Dhampiyā Atuvā Gāṭapadaya* (10th century A. D.) referring to the same episodes, has rendered this Pali expression into Sinhala as *nidas-koḷo* or *nidas-koṭa*, meaning “made (them) free”.¹¹ This word *bhujisse-katvā* occurs also in the very passage quoted by Parānavitana from the *Samantapāsādikā* in support of his interpretation of the word *vaharala*, and he himself has translated it there as ‘manumitted’.¹² It is evident from these references that Parānavitana’s interpretation of the phrase ‘*vaharala cidavi*’ as ‘freed from slavery’ is untenable.

D. J. Wijayaratne, who discusses the interpretation of Parānavitana, objects to it on grounds of incorrect etymology, grammar, undue straining of the meaning of words associated with *vaharala*, and inappropriateness of the interpretation in the context.¹³ According to him ‘It appears that Parānavitana has based his interpretation of the word entirely on the etymology he has suggested for it, although he himself is not absolutely certain of it.’¹⁴ Again he says ‘that neither of the two etymologies that have been suggested can hold water on philological grounds, and hence the meaning attributed to the word on ground of etymology cannot be accepted.’¹⁵

Having rejected Parānavitana’s interpretation of *vaharala cidavi*, Wijayaratne has suggested an alternative interpretation, according to which the meaning of *vaharala* and its variants is ‘timber’ or ‘logs’, and *cidavi* means ‘caused to be cut’.¹⁶ He renders the phrase *vaharala cidavi* as ‘caused timber to be cut’.¹⁷ He has derived the word *vaharala* from the Skt. *visāra*. This interpretation of Wijayaratne is rejected by Parānavitana, also on etymological grounds, for he says ‘it was incumbent on him to ascertain whether a word *visāra*, meaning ‘wood’ or ‘timber’, is actually found in Sanskrit. Until he does so, his theory of *vaharala* being derived from *visāra-la* must be regarded as having no more secure basis than a house built on quick-sand.’¹⁸ Parānavitana also objects to the meaning given by Wijayaratne to the word *cidavi* or *cidavaya*, which precedes or follows the word *vaharala*. He argues

9. *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, ed. K. Rathanasāra Thera, p. 10, ‘*dve dāsa dārake bhujisse katvā*’

10. *Ibid.*, p. 357

11. *Dhampiyā Atuvā Gāṭapadaya*, ed. M. Vimalakitti Thera, pp. 13, 12, 171. 4-5

12. E. Z. Vol. V, p. 60

13. University of Ceylon Review (UCR) Vol. X, p. 103

14. *Ibid.*, p. 105

15. *Ibid.*, p. 107

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 110 - 112

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 114, 117

18. E. Z. Vol. V, p. 63

that 'according W., *cidavi* means 'caused to be cut', the object being *vaharala*, which W. takes to mean 'wood' or 'timber.' In Sanskrit and Pali, forms of the root *chid* are used in the meaning of felling tress; but we are not aware of any context in which such forms are used to indicate other operations necessary to prepare the wood of a tree for architectural purposes, or for the making of furniture. In Pali, forms of the verbs *taceti* and *kotteti* are used to indicate such meanings. In Sinhalese, forms of the root *siñdi*, corresponding to Skt. *chid*, are not found, so far as we are aware, to denote the felling of trees,¹⁹ Hence we may have to ignore the interpretation of Wijayaratne, too, and look for another interpretation.

As has been stated before, the word *vaharala* is either preceded or followed by the word *cidavi* or *cidavaya*. In the present inscription, in place of the phrase *vaharala cidavi*, we have *devaherila cidaviyi* (*de* meaning 'two'), and next these two *vaherilas* are explained as *vake* and *lahabatake*. This gives us a clue to the meaning of *vaharala*. *Lahabat* in Sinhala corresponds to *salāka-bhatta* in Pali, meaning 'food (or rice) to be distributed by tickets.' *Vake*, which word is a synonym of *paka* or *pakkha* in Pali means a 'fortnight.' According to the *Vinaya* texts, the meals given as alms to the monks one day in a fortnight are called '*pakkhika*' and it is a special variety of meal mentioned in the enumeration of five kinds of meals, the other four being *nicca-bhatta* (continuous supply of alms), *salāka-bhatta* (foods to be distributed by tickets), *uposathika-bhatta* (the weekly sacred-day meals) and *pātipadika-bhatta* (meals given on the first day of the lunar month).²⁰ The *Sāratthadīpanī* has explained the term *pakkhika-bhatta* as 'meals given on one day in a fortnight'²¹. The *pakkhika-bhatta* as well as other types of meals may have also been distributed by meal-tickets or *salākā*. The Sinhala word corresponding to the Pali word *salākā* is *laha* or *lā*, and the last element of the word *vaharala*, namely *la* or *laya*, no doubt represents it. It is quite possible that although it is written as *la* in the inscriptions, it may have been in fact pronounced as *lā*. It is also possible that like *paya* ('bowl' or 'foot') later becoming *pā* the last element *laya* in *vahara-laya* became *lā*, meaning *salākā*, after some time.

Next we may examine the meaning of *vahara*, the first element of the compound *vahara-la*. As has been pointed out by Wijayaratne, 'it has a striking resemblance to the word *vihara* or *vahera* in inscriptions, meaning *vihara* (monastery) in Pali, except for the element *la* or *laya*. The word *vihāra*, like *vaherala* is represented in the epigraphs of the first to eight century A. D., as *vahara*, *vahera*, *vahira* and *vehera*. On the grounds of the striking similarity of the orthographical treatment of the two words, one has reason to suspect that the word in question goes back to an original prototype like *vihara* + suffix *la*'.²²

19. *Ibid*, p. 64

20. *Vinaya* ed. Oldenberg Vol. IV, p. 75

21. *Sāratthadīpanī*, ed. T. Devarakhita Thera p. 396: '*ekasmiñ pakkhe eka divasam dāttabba bhattam pakkhikam*)

22. UCR. Vol. X, pp. 110 - 111

As the meaning of Pali *vihāra* + *la* fits in well with the contexts in which this word occurs, the word *vahara* and its variants, no doubt, stands for *vihāra*, meaning 'monastery'. Hence the word *vaharala* or *vaharalaya* may be interpreted as 'monastic tickets', and the phrase *vaharala cidavi* and its variants as 'caused the monastic tickets to be broken' or 'caused the monastic tickets to be issued' or 'caused the issue of monastic tickets'. Some references to this practice of issuing meal-tickets in the *Sahassavatthupparāṇa* of the Anurādhapura period and in the *Rasavāhinī* of the Daṁbadeṇiya period lend support to this interpretation. It is stated in the story of Ariyagāla Tissa that a lay devotee named Tissa having gone to a *vihāra* caused the monks there to issue him meal tickets (*mahāvihāraṁ gantvā salāka-bhattaṁ chindūpetvā*).²³ A similar story in the *Rasavāhinī* refers to a lay devotee named Goḷa who, having gone to a *vihāra*, invited the monks there to accept alms from him, and the monks having accepted his invitation 'caused (meal) tickets to be broken (or issued) in his name (*salākaṁ attano nāmena chinditvā bhikkhūnaṁ adāsi*).²⁴ The Sinhala version of this story in the *Saddharmāṅkāraya* has the relevant passage rendered into Sinhala as '*tamangē namin laha kappavā bhikṣūn vahansē ataṭa dun sēka*'.²⁵ Hence 'it is evident that the word *chindūpetvā*, meaning 'having caused to be issued', which occurs in the *Sahassavatthupparāṇa* and in the *Rasavāhinī*, and the word *cidavi* or *cidavaya* of the inscriptions have the same meaning. Therefore, it is quite clear now that the phrase *vaharala cidavi* has been used in the inscriptions with reference to the issuing of monastic meal tickets.²⁶ This interpretation fits in well with the context of the passages in which this phrase occurs. In the light of this interpretation, a few passages from the inscriptions with the phrase *vaharala cidavi* may now be rendered as follows:

- (1) *Oluvaḍu Puyagonulami Kasapa-gari raja-maha-vahare siya agana vaharala cidavi*²⁷

'I' Puyagonulami, the brick-layer.....caused monastic tickets worth hundred (*kahāpaṇas*) to be issued, at Kassapagiri *raja maha vihāra*.'

- (2) *Mihidala simidariyana sidava veheralaya*²⁸

'Lord Mihidala caused the monastic tickets to be issued'.

23. *Sahassavatthupparāṇa* (Sha) ed. P. Buddhadatta Thera p. 54

24. *Rasavāhinī*, ed K. Nānavimāla Thera, p. 275

25. *Saddharmāṅkāraya* ed. B. Śraddhātīsyā Thera p. 717

26. Mādauyangoda Vimalakitti Thera has rendered the word *vaharala* as *vihāra-salāka* in his *Silā Lekhana Saṅgrahaya*, Vol. V. pp 88-89, but he has not produced any evidence in support of his rendering.

27. E. Z. Vol. IV. p. 133

28. E. Z. Vol. IV. p. 144

Note: The word *simidariyana* appears to be the prototype of *samdaruvan* of the late Anurādhapura period. Parānavitana has rendered the word *samdaruvan* as 'the lords.'²⁹

- (3)*Pa(lama) dama Apama Apahaya-gara-vaharaṭa vaharala vaṭa kaṭa ekasayaka kahavaṇa daya.*³⁰ 'Pa(lama) dama Apama gave one hundred *kahāpaṇas* to the Apahayagara monastery as expenses for monastic tickets.'

It can be seen from the translation of the three inscriptions above that the present interpretation fits well with their contexts.

Having ascertained the meaning of the phrase *vaharala cidavi*, we may now examine the meanings of the words *sayamala* and *alamala*, which we come across in some inscriptions of the sixth and seventh centuries.³¹ In the light of the new interpretation, it can be inferred that the two words *sayamala* and *alamala* stand for the names of two items of food. As has been pointed out by Wijeyaratne, *sayamala* may be identified with modern *siyaṁbala*, 'tamarind', an essential ingredient used in the preparation of food in ancient Sri Lanka.³² From this it is evident that some monastic meal tickets have been utilized to obtain a quota of tamarind for use in the monastic refectories.

The meaning of the word *alamala* is obscure; like *sayamala*, it can be an item of food given to the monasteries during that period. The mediaeval Sinhala word *alamul* meaning bulbous roots, resembles this word closely. The *Jātaka-Atuvā-Gāṭapadaya* (12th century A. D.) has given the word *alamul* as the meaning of the Pali *kanda-mūla*.³³ If the *alamala* is the same in meaning as *alamula*, provision of some bulbous roots like sweet-potatoes, to a *vihāra* by meal tickets may have been inferred by the phrase *alamala vaharala*. Following the meaning given above to the two words *sayamala* and *alamala*, we may now render an inscription in which the word *sayamala* occurs, and another in which *alamala* occurs as follows :

- (1) *Vilagama vasana Kapara-aṭaka Vasayaha dana sayamala va(harāla).*³⁴
'The monastic tickets for tamarind was given by Kapara-aṭaka Vasa, who lives in Vilagama.'
- (2) *Kanaṭayaha vasana Yasaha cadava alamala vaharala.*³⁵
'Yasa, who lives in Kanaṭaya caused the monastic tickets for bulbous roots to be issued.'

29. E. Z. Vol. V, p. 140, E. Z. Vol. 111, pp. 88-89, 290

30. E. Z. Vol. IV, p. 139

31. ÚCR. Vol. X, pp. 116 - 117; SS. p. 36

32. Ibid, p. 116, The occurrence of the word *siyamala* in place of *sayamala* in a few epigraphs lend support to the identification of *sayamala* as tamarind.

33. *Jātaka Atuvā Gāṭapadya (JAG)* ed. M. Vimalakitti Thera p. 179. 12

34. SS Vol. II, p. 36

35. Ibid. p. 36

Another word connected with *vaharala*, namely, *maha-vaharala* occurs in a slab-inscription found at Divulavāva, near the 27th mile post on the Kākirāva-Trincomalee main road.³⁶ This word, corresponding to Pali *mahā-vihārasalākā*, may have been applied, as the name indicates, to a special kind of monastic meal tickets. It may be rendered as 'the great monastic (meal) tickets', but we cannot be certain whether the adjective *maha* attached to this word had been applied to indicate the quantity or quality of the meals offered by these tickets or whether they were the tickets issued by the recognized *mahā-vihāras* or 'great monasteries.'

The practice of donating money to the monasteries for the purpose of offering alms by monastic meal tickets had been continued up to the end of the Anurādhapura period. This is evident from some inscriptions found at Māṇikdeṇa and at the Mādagama Vihāra.³⁷ But the phraseology and the format of the inscriptions of the later period had been changed. One of the inscriptions found at the Mādagama Vihāra states that a person named Tissa having received a meal ticket after paying five *hunas* of gold to the monks at the Kuṃbumugiri Vihāra, offered it back so that it would continue until the sun and moon last.³⁸

The discussion on the inscription dealt with in this paper may now be resumed. The object of this epigraph was to register a donation of six hundred *kahavaṇas* by a person named Vasu Kamarayi Hivi for the purpose of purchasing two kinds of monastic meal tickets, one for providing alms fortnightly and the other probably daily. According to the *Danta Kutumbika Vatthu* in the *Sahassavatthupparāṇa*, sometimes the alms by meal tickets had been given daily to the monks by the persons who purchased them.³⁹ As to the name of the donor of six hundred *kahavaṇas* Hivi appears to be his name and Kamarayi the name of his village of residence. The other word *vasu* may indicate his profession. According to the *Sikhavalaṇḍa Vinisa Piṭapota*, '*vasukam*' is the meaning of *koṭṭakikam*, corresponding to *kottakakamma* in Pali.⁴⁰ The *Jātaka Aṭuvā-Gūṭapadaya* explains the word *kottaka-kula* as *miṇikaru-kula* or *galvaḍu-kula*, meaning 'family of gem-cutters or stone-cutters'.⁴¹ Thus it follows that *kottaka* or *vasu* may mean 'a gem-cutter' or 'a stone mason'.

Our epigraph does not reveal the name of the monastery to which the donation of six hundred *kahavaṇas* was made. Hence, we are unable to ascertain the ancient name of the site of this epigraph.

36. SS. Vol. I, p. 14

37. *Prajñā Prabhā*, Felicitation Vol. pp. 78-79; Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, Inscription Register (ASCIR), No. 726, 727, 2398, 2399, 2400; see also E. Z. Vol. III, pp. 258 - 259.

38. ASCIR, No. 726: '*Tisdemi Kumbumugiri vehera mahasaṅgnat pas-huṇak ran dī lahābatak gena hirsāṇḍ pamaṇin demi dinmi mihi belen buduvenvā*

39. *Sha.* p. 191

40. *Sikhavalaṇḍa Vinisa Piṭapota*, ed. V. Medhānanda Thera p. 14

41. JAG. p. 120. It can also mean 'a carpenter'.

As we have mentioned earlier, H. C. P. Bell has taken the three inscriptions on the rock as one and, as a result, the transcript of the inscription given by him is all mixed up. His transcription is reproduced below for a comparison with the present reading:⁴²

(Transcript - by Bell)

1. Sidam Vasu Kamaravila visa siṇāma (su)
2. hakidipa de vaheri laci di - vara.....
3. vi viva ke.....lahabata ke vi - mahapali
4. mahamadi

TEXT

1. සිදම වසු කමරයි හිවි සසියක ක
2. හවිණි දිය දෙවහෙරිල විදි
3. විසි වකෙ ඉ(වො) ලහබතකි ඉවො

TRANSCRIPT

1. Sidama Vasu Kamarayi Hivi sasiyaka ka-
2. haviṇi diya devaherila cidi-
3. viyi vake i (co) lahabataki ico

TRANSLATION

Hail! Hivi, the lapidary of Kamaraya, having donated six hundred *kahāpaṇas* caused two monastic tickets, (namely) a *pakkhika* and *salāka bhatta*, to be issued.

COMMENTS

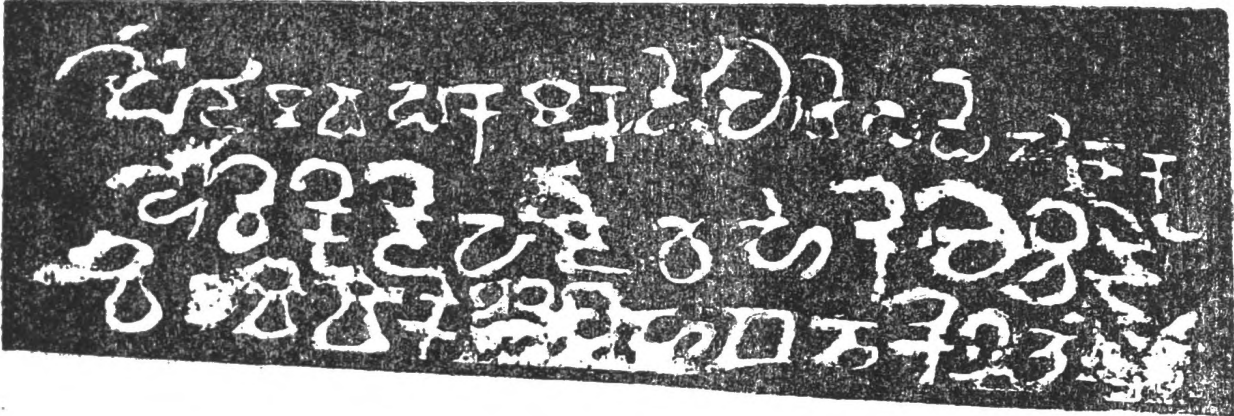
L. 1, *Sidama*, P. *siddhi*; 'hail', 'prosperity' or 'success.'

L. 1, *vasu*, lapidary; see the introduction.

Ll. 1-2, *sasiyaka kahaviṇi*; *sa+siya*, means 'six hundred'; *kahaviṇi*, corresponds to *karṣāpaṇa* in Skt. and *kahāpaṇa* in Pali. It is a coin, often made of gold, which was in use in ancient India as well as in ancient Ceylon.

42. Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, Seventh Progress Report, 1896, p. 54.

- L.2. *diya*>*dī* (in modern Sinhala), ‘having given.’
- L.2. *devaherila*, see the introduction.
- L1.2-3 *cidiviya*, P. *chindāpetvā*, see the introduction.
- L. 3. *vake*, P. *pakkhika*, meaning ‘a fortnight’; see the introduction.
- L. 3. *ico*, a copulative or disjunctive particle, meaning ‘and’. It corresponds to Pali, *ca* and is the prototype of *isā* of the late Anurādhapura period. Often it appears in the inscriptions of the first to eight century A.D. as *ica*.
- L. 3. *lahabataki*. P. *salakā-bhatta*, and *salāka batak* or *lahabatak* in Sinhala, meaning a meal given as alms on a meal-ticket; see the introduction. S. Childers, Pali Dict. s. v. *salākā*: ‘Food belonging to collective saṅgha of a monastery was sometimes distributed to the monks by tickets called *salākā*, and consisting of slips of wood, bark, bamboo, talipot leaf or other similar material. Food so distributed was called *salākabhattam*, ‘ticket food’. Similar tickets seem to have been issued by private persons, like our soup-tickets’.



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