

Two Unique Grammatical Tools Used in the Traditional Pali Studies of Myanmar

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1. General Introduction

Pali learning in Myanmar has been unique — for better or for worse. Myanmar has been a comparatively isolated country, and the traditional field of Pali studies, as part of the cultural heritage of the country, has developed more or less independently of outside influences. As a result, modern fields of comparative philology, research methodology, etc., are unknown to the majority of Pali students in Myanmar. On the other hand, generations of students and scholars have managed to preserve traditional methods and contributions — many of which are still highly relevant and useful today.

Unfortunately the language barrier has prevented modern scholars from taking advantage of many contributions of Myanmar towards Pali studies. (This is especially true as regards the monastic jargon — obscure even to ordinary Burmese people not brought up in the atmosphere of monastic education.) It would be the task of Burmese monks like the present author to make them accessible for the modern scholarship. And it is hoped this paper would be a small step to accomplish it.