



## Myanmar Sangha Administration of Pali Studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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### Abstract

Objectives of this research were to study the Myanmar Sangha administration of Pali Study in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the factors affecting the Pali Studies administration by Myanmar Sangha and to find the results of Pali study by Sangha administration committees in Myanmar, using qualitative research collected data from 20 key informants and analyzed data by descriptive interpretation. Findings were that Pali studies of traditional and modern methods up to 2019. At present Myanmar Sangha Pali study consists of two different systems; traditional and modern Pali study with university system. Main traditional Pali studies were also divided into three systems of examinations. There are Pali Pathmapya examination, Dhammacariya examination and Tipitaka selection examination. The Supreme Council of Sangha Administration that takes care of Pali Studies is structured with three Sangha committees. There are state Sangha Mahanayaka Committees, State Central Working Committee, and State Admonition, or Supervisory Committee. Under the administration of Sangha Mahanayaka Committee, both of two Pali examinations were controlled, and those were held by Sangha Mahanayaka Committee and Ministry of Religious Affairs. Sangha Mahanayaka Committee and state government established Sangha Universities in which Pali is studied with modern methods in 1986. Those are called governmental Pali study. Main concern is the situation of Sangha population in Yagon Region. Numbers of monks and novices who remained in the monkhood more than three Buddhist Lents and studied Pali in Sangha universities are declining drastically year by year.

**Keywords:** Myanmar Sangha Administration, Pali Studies, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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## Introduction

Pali language that was used to record the Buddhist Scripture has been studied Under the leadership of modern Myanmar Sangha administration, leading Sangha in Myanmar, the Pali literature has been studying for along time. (Ashin Kumara, 2007). There are two Pali Studies systems; traditional Pali examination and Sangha University Pali examination. (Sangha mahanayak committee, 2015). In ancient time, Sangha has studied without examination system before Ava period. However, the Pali examination system was introduced in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in the Ava period, and in the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Pali studies were enhanced to be studied with modern system. Myanmar Sangha Administrations were modified to be managed for the general work on Buddha Sanana from time to time. Although Myanmar Sangha maintained the traditional Pali study and the monastic learning centers with many Sangha populations for a long time (Tin Aung Aye (2016).. Nowadays Sangha populations are declining at the monastic learning centers in every city. The young boys do not go to the temples to receive Pali study but they go to state schools only for their careers. For this reason, researcher would like to study what it is happening in Myanmar Sangha Pali study world, declining of Sangha populations and how to learn and maintain Pali study with perspective of Sangha educational management under the

leadership of the present Myanmar Sangha Supreme Council.

## Objectives:

Objectives of this research were:

1. To study Myanmar Sangha administration of Pali studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century of Myanmar.
2. To study the factors enhancing Myanmar Sangha administration of Pali studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
3. To study the result of Myanmar Sangha administration of Pali studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Research Methodology:

This research was to study Myanmar Sangha administration of Pali studies in 21<sup>st</sup> century of Myanmar, factors enhancing Myanmar Sangha administration of Pali studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to present the result of Myanmar Sangha administration of Pali studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, applied the qualitative research method collected data from 24 key informants who were Sangha Administrators, Pali language teachers and Pali studies students with the structured in-depth interview transcripts by face-to-face interviewing and data were analyzed by descriptive inter-pretation.



### Research findings:

Findings of this research were as follows:

#### Myanmar Sangha Administration of Pali Studies in the 21st Century.

Pali study administration was under the leadership of Sangha Mahanayaka Committee. Pali studies and examinations were held and sponsored by Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture. In the 21st century, two Pali examination systems are used, traditional and modern Pali study with university system. Current Sangha educational policy divides Pali studies into two systems. One is traditional Pali study and examination, which is used for long time. Another one is modern Pali study in Sangha university. The traditional Pali examinations are different in contents and levels such as Pali Pathmapyayam examination with four levels. Dhamma cariya examination, and Tipitaka selection examination consist of both oral and written examinations. Before 21st century, traditional Pali study and examinations raised a large number of Sangha learner populations and could be seen in the monastic teaching centers in small and big cities over the country. Besides most of the state schools are increasing year by year in Yangon Region including other States and Regions. At the end of 20 century, the situation of Myanmar Sangha is judged and introduced the modern learning with Sangha University in Yangon and Mandalay that learners can study in both modern and

traditional systems in full details. In 1986, two state universities were established in Yangon and Mandalay, Pariyatti and Sasana universities which are non-international Sangha universities under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture. In 1998, International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University was established in Yangon Region. This university is under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture. International Theravada Buddhist

Missionary University uses free educational system, free accommodation system, free meal and was taken care of by Myanmar government and university council. In the same ways, private Sangha universities in Myanmar used all of the free systems by university council. So, in the 21st century, three Sangha universities were established to study Buddhist Pali literature by the modern learning system. And another famous private Sangha university is Sitagu International Buddhist Academy in Sagaing and one of its branches opened in Yangon. Sitagu International Buddhist Academy is a private university in which both of monks and laypeople study. Now, 21st century, about fifty Sangha collages are under construction Meanwhile, Pali scholar monks are trying to appraise qualified young generation to study Pali. In contrast perspectives, laypeople go to state schools and study worldly education in Myanmar. Most of Sangha learners are interested in modern Pali study at Sangha University and collages after finishing Pathamapyayam



Pathamagyi levels. Findings also revealed that current Pali studies are diminishing. Government Sangha universities have few sangha numbers, annually about 90 students passed entrance examination of State Pariyatti Sasana University, Yangon Region. It is considered a few numbers for Myanmar Sangha University.

#### **The Factor Affecting of Myanmar Sangha Administration of Pali Studies in the 21st Century.**

The factors affecting the Pali Studies administration in Myanmar were of five: four educational programs, Pali teachers, Current policy and financial support from state and private agency. Sangha education policies should be enhanced by the Sangha Council and government, so that education system will be developed, and modernized in Myanmar. Moreover, populations of Sangha that are declining in Myanmar could be developed again both in numbers and quality. According to 24 informants from in-depth interviewing indicated that current syllabus and teaching methods are needed to change about twenty percent. On the other hand, the academies for Sangha are needed in many states and Regions. If Sangha University and collages are opened in many states and Regions or the local areas, most monks and novices can be interested in and want to go these universities or colleges in their minds. It is also a good strategy for maintaining Sangha populations. If they got certificates or one of degrees, they will be mindfully satisfied

They can get new ideas on how to apply, how to use future with own knowledge. it is the important strategy for the reformatory issue, and monk resource maintaining issues. By these strategies, most monks and novices will remain in the monkhood because majority of them did not pass Dhammacariya level after finishing the Pathamagyi level.

#### **The Result of Myanmar Sangha administration of Pali Studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**

Since Sangha populations in many monasteries and regions and monastic learning centers are declining around the country. The Pali study is also declining due to minimal ordination of novices and monks. Most of Pali teachers want to modify the Pali subjects, curriculum and teaching system in accordance to new educational system. Many village monasteries are in remote areas and difficult to search. Most young boys go to city to learn at modern schools and universities and vocational institutions. According to Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture indicating that Sangha populations are really declining, but state schools are increasing during ten years. Most of monks, up to 60 per cent, change their status to become laymen to lay peoples life. Only other 40 percent remained in the monkhood because of a firm belief in Buddhism. Most of the monks disrobed to become lay people because of disappointment after examination failure. The monk's candidates do not meet the marks or points they hope for. At present, local youths do not come to monasteries to become



novices If novice-resources are not available at local temples, they also are not available at a town, province, state, region and big cities. At present, Pali subjects, curriculum and teaching system are needed to be improved and developed in order to maintain Pali language studies by monks and novices at all levels and areas.

### Conclusion

Myanmar Sangha administration progressed from the past to present in Myanmar. Three main Sangha Organizations take responsibility to manage religious issues such as administration, education and judicial issues. Current Pali studies and examination are held by State Sanghamahanayaka Committee with sponsors from state government. In the 21st century, there are three kinds of examinations: PaliPathamapyan examination, Dhammacariya examination, and Tipitaka selection examination. Government established the Buddhist Universities in Yangon and Mandalay Regions such as two State Pariyatti Sasana Universities and Theravada Buddhist Missionary University. So, there are two different systems, traditional and modern, of Pali studies in the 21st century in Myanmar. The big concern is that populations of monks and novices who study Pali language by both systems are declining, one reason because of disappointment with the Pali Studies systems that are so difficult to pass examination at any levels

### Discussion

The current status of Myanmar Sangha administration of Pali study belongs to Myanmar Sangha leaders who managed and ruled the administration of Pali study in the 21st century. In the past, 9 Buddhist sects were united as one body of Sangha Order that worked with participation in the Sangha examination and other works related to religious affairs. At that time, it was under the revolutionary council, government and all sections were controlled by the government. At present, the highest or supreme Sangha Organization are divided into three main organizations which were called State Ovâdâcariya Committee (state sayadaw for admonition or advisory sayadaws), Sangha Mahanayaka Committee (state Sangha executive committee) State Sangha Won Song (state Central working committee or service committee). Under those highest organizations, sub-organizations were also organized for Regions, state, town and village levels, step by step to work Sasana affairs. Sangha educational quality became low before organizing the three main Sangha organizations. For this reason, Sangha organizations were re-organized in 1980. After nine Buddhist sects were united in 1980, the new sect can be protected and modified their education policy. Thus, new Myanmar Sangha administration and educational policy can be promoted. That policy existed up to the present time. Besides, New Buddhist sects establishment was prohibited by the rules of Sangha Mahânâyaka Committee. Now, the main three Sangha Committee could delegate



each committee to manage Pali studies administration respectively because this three main Sangha Committee have representatives from all sects. Myanmar Sangha Administration could maintain the TipitakaPali canon, commentary, and sub-commentary from a long time to present because Myanmar Sangha leaders used good traditional Pali learning method for easy understanding from age to age. At the beginning of Pali examination period, they can use own traditional teaching ways for examinations system. At present, they could enhance their Pali teaching system as of modern Pali teaching. Myanmar Sangha's population is declining annually. Most of Myanmar monks want to change the subjects, curriculums and teaching system. Besides most of monks are very weak in foreign languages although they expert in Pali language. It is a challenge to the future on Myanmar Sangha and Myanmar society. At present Sangha universities are situated only in Yangon and Mandalay Regions. These universities are very far from their local areas. Sangha universities or a modern learning center need to establish in many states and regions. Nowadays most of the young boy do not come to the local monastic temples. They prefer to go to the state schools to study for their careers. State schools are increasing annually, It shows that negative with monastic learning center's declining.

### **Suggestion**

Since curriculum and teaching systems of Pali studies in Myanmar are not modified.

Sangha education should be enhanced to be improved by the Ministray of Religious Affairs and Culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If teaching system and curriculum are good, Sangha education will be more progressive with higher standard than it is now. The adminis-tration should concentrate on improving Pali curriculum and learning and teching system.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **Recommendation for policy making:**

- 1) Sangha Order should fully support with resource persons, money and technology.
- 2) Curriculum should be improved for Sangha education in Myanmar by Ministry of Religious Affair and Culture. Since Sangha populations are really declining annually but state schools increasing during the ten years.
- 3) More Pali academies for Sangha should be established at many states and Regions. More novices and young monks ordinations should be promoted.

#### **Recommendation for policy implementation:**

- 1) Financial support is very important for the Sangha University. With money support, Singha populations, monks and novices and students of Pali language could be recruited and multiplied. About over one hundred students in Sangha universities annually. Could be recruited. Without money support from government and Sangha Order, nothing can be improved, either teaching materials, student populations and technology



2) Technology is very important communication tool when peoples reach the updated information for the university. And other countries all over the world apply and enhance updated information.

3) Academies for Sangha or its branches are needed for many Regions and States. At present, Sangha universities are situated only in Yangon, Mandalay and Sagaing Regions. If more campuses or branches of Sangha university and colleges are opened in the local area, most of the monks can be interested in and want to go these university or collage in their minds.

#### Recommendation for Further Research

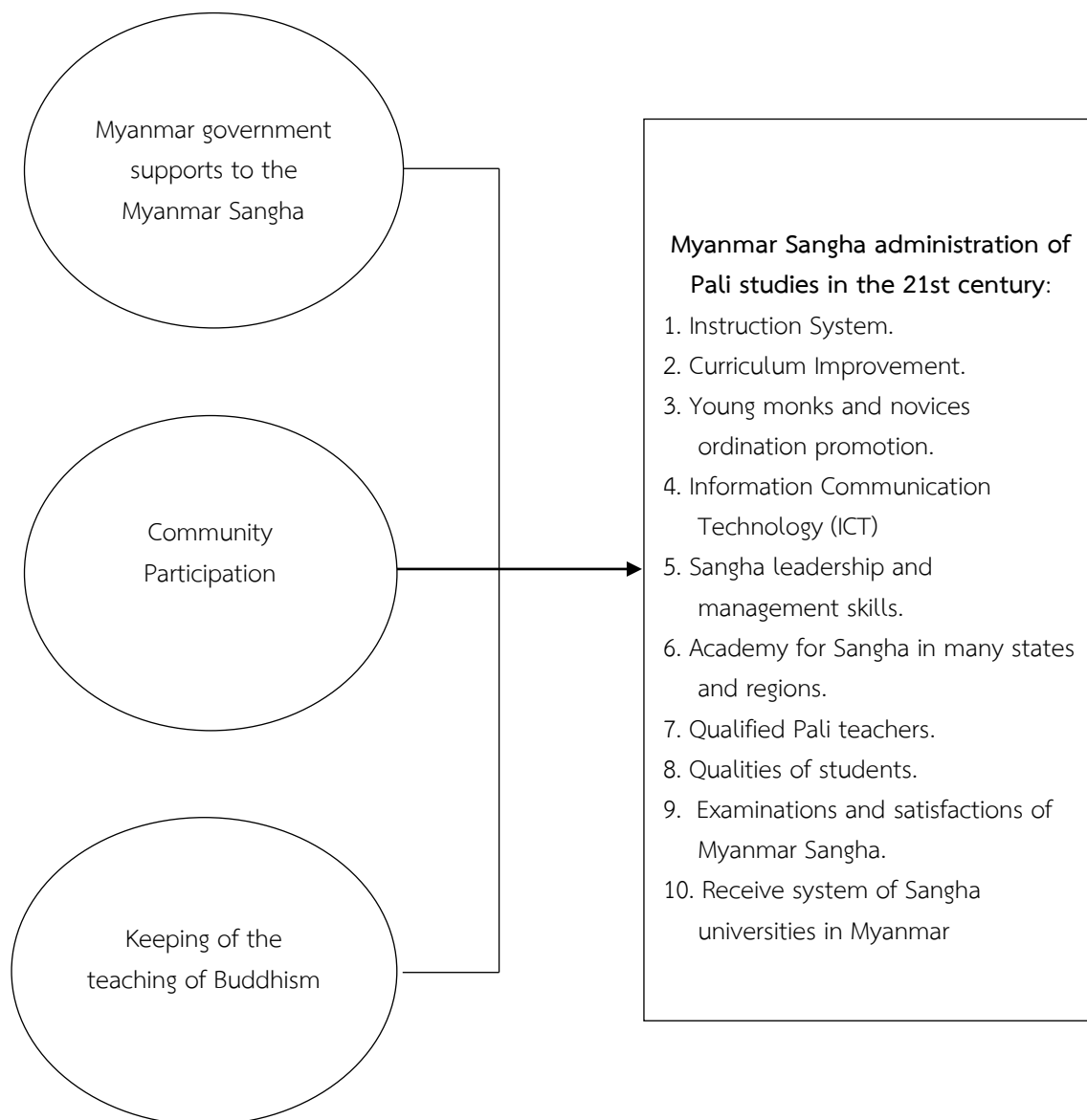
1) There should be study of two kinds of association examinations. These association examinations are very famous and very high class in Pali examination field. These two association examinations are called “Sakasiha Dhammacariya” in Mandalay and “Cetiyinganna Dhammacariya” in Yangon.

2) There should be a study of two association examinations for novices. Those association examinations for novices are sponsored by own association. Association Pali examinations are established in local two, some are local temples. It is held only for novice before 20 ages.

3) There should be comparison study between government traditional Pali examination and association Pali examinations in the areas of teaching system, syllabus, curriculums, knowledge ability and students' life quality.

#### Body of Knowledge

In the body of knowledge, the left side consists of three blocks that are as follows. There are Myanmar government supports the Myanmar Sangha Pali studies, Community Participation and Keeping of the teaching of Buddhism. Because of the left side independent variables cause the right side content, the dependent variables, to occur. They are: 1) Instruction System. 2) Curriculum Improvement. 3) Young monks and novices ordination promotion. 4) Information Communication Technology (ICT), 5) Sangha leadership and management skills. 6) Academy for Sangha in many States and Regions. 7) Qualified Pali Teachers. 8) Qualities Students. 9) Examinations and Satisfactions of Myanmar Sangha. 10) Receive system of Sangha universities in Myanmar. Left side blocks are directly government and Sangha Organizations support, while the right side was the results, dependent variables, of the left side—Myanmar Sangha Administration of Pali studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



In summary, explanation of this body of knowledge was that Sangha Mahanayaka Committee managed the Sangha educational administration together with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture. So the government sponsored all government traditional Pali examinations and Sangha Universities. The community participation, Myanmar Sangha participated in helping communities some time with social welfares

because of loving- kindness and Sangha helped when the crisis took place around the country such as case of fires, case of water flood, poor school boys in some places. Pali study can be kept up to present in Myanmar, by an educational legacy from the former Sangha Administration that carried out the Pali studies for long time. Myanmar Sangha administration of Pali studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century was traditional Pali





studies and modern Pali studies in Sangha universities. There should be curriculum learning and teaching system improvement with new modern educational system. At present, Pali studies and examinations are very hard for learners to pass the subjects. It is quite discouraging for young monks and novices to study the Pali language. So new methods of learning should be improved to encourage young monks and novices to study Pali language. Besides, new subjects adding should be considered, such as mathematics, herbal medicine, Information Communication Technology. In addition, modern languages such as English and Chinese should be added in the Paly Studies curriculum so that monks and novices will be equipped with new language and technology so that they can communicate Buddhism and Dhamma with the world

effectively. There also should be a promotion for young monk and novice ordination at all regions in the country. At present, young people go to state schools for study. Very few young people become monks and novices to study the Pali language. If Pali curriculum, contents of the subjects, learning and teaching systems are improved and developed. More Young people will become monks and novices and spend some Buddhist Lents at monasteries around the country and study Pali with a new system with enthusiasm. In return, young monks and novices will be well equipped with language skills in Pali as well as other languages and new technology. They will be able to communicate Buddhism and Dhamma to the world effectively and efficiently.

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