

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PALAUNG-YUAN BUDDHISTS TRADITION OF PARITTA-CHANTING IN MYANMAR WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON DRIVING AWAY EVIL SPIRITS

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The *Palaung* is an ethnic group in Myanmar. They are a Mon-Khmer speaking people in northern Shan state and sparsely in other parts of Shan state as well as southern Kachin state of Myanmar. Most of them are Buddhists who belong to two sects or groups; Yuan Buddhist School and Burmese Buddhist School. This research is to introduce the Paritta-chanting tradition of the Palaungs who follow the Yuan Buddhist School. The main objective of this paper is to discuss the Paritta-chanting of Buddhist cultures in Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Although this topic will be primarily based on the Palaung-Yuan Buddhists tradition, it will comparatively present some Burmese and Sinhalese traditions related to the Paritta-chanting. In addition, some historical facts shall be included in this topic. The most interesting arguments in this topic are; do monks in Myanmar appreciate the Paritta-chanting of Sinhala Buddhists tradition? Do Buddhists in Myanmar significantly tie the *Pirit-nûl* and sip the *Pirit-water* like Sinhala Buddhists? Whether the Paritta-chanting can help people to drive evil spirits or not? Of them, the last fact will be the heart of this discussion and it can probably elevate the deepest faith in Paritta-chanting. To understand the way in which Paritta work, one has to probe into the deep devotional psychology of the Palaung Buddhist. Historically, Myanmar and Sri Lanka had a long standing relationship concerning Buddhasâsanâ. Buddhist sects that come from Myanmar can be still found in Sri Lanka so it could be said that their great mutual solidarity is still alive today. However, it is very rare to see that scholars try to write or discuss Buddhist traditions related to both counties. Therefore, this investigation will be an attempt to fulfill the gap of Buddhist traditions between Myanmar and Sri Lanka for their religious and cultural relationships.

Keywords: Buddhist traditions, Paritta-chanting, Evil spirits