

## THE GRAMMATICAL TERMINOLOGY OF THE PALI COMMENTARIES (AṬṬHAKATHĀS)

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### Introduction

Terminology means the technical terms of a particular subject. Accordingly, grammatical terminology may be understood as the technical terms used by the grammarians. The main purpose for which the technical terms are used is brevity. In the beginning, Sanskrit grammarians like Panini, *Patañjali* and *Śarvavarman* introduced grammatical terms such as *akūara*, *avya*, *svara*, *vyñjana*, *taddhita* and *prātipadika* etc. and after that the Pali grammarians from *Kaccāyana* onwards followed them. But we are able to see some indigenous grammatical terms in the Pali commentaries written before *Kaccāyana*. The objective of this paper is to inquire into these terms.

### Discussion

Pali grammarians from *Kaccāyana* onwards tried to depict Pali as an independent language distinct from Sanskrit. In this context they also tried to develop a full-fledged grammatical system for Pali with the indigenous *Dhātupāṭha* and *Gaṇapāṭha*. With regard to technique and terminology, however, the Pali grammarians heavily drew upon the Sanskrit grammarians.

This does not mean that there was a total absence of grammatical knowledge in the pre-*Kaccāyana* era. The pre-*Kaccāyana* *Aṭṭhakathā* literature of commentators like *Buddhaghosa*, *Dhammapāla* and *Buddhadatta* is full of grammatical discussions. In the *Visuddhimagga* and *Aṭṭhakathās*, *Buddhaghosa* has occasionally discussed points of grammar in order to explain a syntactical problem, a particular construction, or the derivation of a particular word. Though these discussions are mainly based on the *Pāṇinian* grammar, the terminology found

therein is sometimes so distinct that a number of terms that used by *Buddhaghosa* have no parallel in Sanskrit grammar. For example: the terms denote the grammatical cases: *Paccatta*, *upayoga*, *Karaṇa*, *Sampadāniya*, *Nissakka*, *Sāmi*, *Bhumma* and *Ālapana*. Out of these, *Nissakka*, *Bhumma* and *Ālapana* are peculiar to Pāli. The scope of this terminology is limited to:

1. Phonological terminology
2. Case terminology
3. Two sets of terms denoting four types of the nominal
4. Terms denoting the parts of speech
5. Terms denoting adverbs
6. Terms denoting words, sentences and syllables

Although this limited terminology was available to *Kaccāyana* and his successors, they have preferred the use of only those terms, which were also established in the Sanskrit grammatical tradition.

### Methodology

This paper is mainly based on a literary survey and personal observations. Data collected from the commentaries were analyzed using the descriptive and comparative methods.

### Conclusions

The Pali grammarians seem to have thought it better to use the terminology current in grammatical parlance rather than the terminology used in the commentaries. However, the rudimentary character of the vocabulary of commentaries would seem to indicate that it was established by its relevance for the canonical exegesis and the wish to use a distinct Pali terminology for the purpose, rather than the intention of establishing a comprehensive Pali

grammatical system. Though one accepts this view there still remains ample scope to believe that by the time of the *Aṭṭhakathās* Pali scholarship started showing its inclination towards an indigenous tradition of Pali philology independent of Sanskrit.

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