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## Buddhist Nuns' Ordination in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* Tradition: Two Possible Approaches

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# Buddhist Nuns’ Ordination in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* Tradition: Two Possible Approaches

Bhikṣuṇī Jampa Tsedroen<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

This article examines the possibilities of reviving the Mūlasarvāstivāda lineage of fully ordained nuns (*bhikṣuṇī*). It explores two ways to generate a “flawless and perfect” Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇī* vow, either by Mūlasarvāstivāda monks alone or by Mūlasarvāstivāda monks with Dharmaguptaka nuns (“ecumenical” ordination). The first approach is based on a *Vinaya* passage which traditionally

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is taken as the *Word of the Buddha*, but which, from a historical-critical point of view, is dubious. The second approach is not explicitly represented in the *Vinaya* but involves “re-reading” or “re-thinking” it with a critical-constructive attitude (“theological” approach). Each approach is based on my latest findings from studying the Tibetan translation of the *Bhikṣuṇyupasaṃpadājñāpti* and related commentaries.

### Introduction

In 2012, by invitation of the Department of Religion and Culture of the Tibetan Government in Exile, a “high-level scholarly committee” comprising ten monk scholars—two representatives from each of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism and two monk scholars representing the Tibetan Nuns’ Project—gathered in Dharamsala to examine the possibilities of reviving the Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇī* lineage.<sup>2</sup> The Tibetan Gelongma Research Committee focused on finding means to ensure that the ordination of nuns will be “flawless and perfect” (Tib. *nyes med phun sum tshogs pa*), ensuring that nuns, like monks, will become Mūlasarvāstivādins.

During that meeting in Dharamsala I suggested two ways<sup>3</sup> to generate this flawless and perfect Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇī* vow, i.e., an

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.phayul.com/news/article.aspx?id=31850> (accessed 20 February 2015).

<sup>3</sup> According to Petra Kieffer-Pülz (Presuppositions 217) there are three options for the revival of a *bhikṣuṇī* ordination within the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition: (1) not to revive the *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha*; (2) to introduce the *bhikṣuṇī* lineage from the Dharmaguptaka tradition into the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition; or (3) to create a new *bhikṣuṇī* lineage within the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition by ordaining women by monks. Here I am following a

ordination by bhikṣus alone based on the first *gurudharma*, and an “ecumenical” ordination by Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣus* and Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇīs*.

(1) *An ordination by bhikṣus alone based on the first gurudharma*

Here we need to keep in mind that from a historical-critical point of view, the authenticity of the *Mahāprajāpatīgautamīvastu*, especially the eight rules (Skt. *gurudharmas*, Pā. *garudhammas*), is questionable—they are rendered differently in the currently accessible *Vinaya* traditions (Hirakawa 48; Hüsken *Vorschriften* 258; Heirman *Some* 35; J. Chung *Gurudharma*). These rules subordinate nuns to monks (Hüsken *Vorschriften*; Finnegan *Sake* 321). Their acceptance constitutes Mahāprajāpatī’s ordination. In the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* they are pronounced at the end of full ordination (*upasampada*) and have to be observed as long as one remains a nun (Tsedroen & Anālayo 758). In the Pāli *Vinaya*, seven of the eight *garudhammas* correspond to the *pācittiya* section in the *Bhikkhūnivhaṅga*. This leads to several inconsistencies: in the Theravāda tradition, for example, the penalties for the transgression of these rules are higher than for the transgression of *pācittiya* offences (Hüsken *Vorschrift-*

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different list of three options discussed during the 4th Vinaya Masters’ Seminar on Bhikṣuṇī ordination held by the Tibetan Department of Religion and Culture on 28/29th April, 2008. I am asking (1) whether a Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣu saṅgha* on its own can give *bhikṣuṇī* ordination; (2) whether *bhikṣuṇī* ordination can be given by male and female *saṅghas* of different orders; and (3) whether there are further options than the above two. In 2008 the 16 participants, four representatives from each of the four main Tibetan Buddhist traditions, could not come to a consensus on the first question. There was consensus, however, on the impossibility of the second option, and in principle they were not objecting nuns receiving Dharmaguptaka vows (email by Thupten Tsering, DRC dated May 7, 2008), a decision officially taken in 2015 as I will report below.

en 350, 356-360). The same goes for the *gurudharmas* in the Chinese Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya* (Heirman *Gurudharma* 21-22).

Hüsken discusses in detail why the eight *garudhammas* must have been formulated or arranged after the completion of the *Pāṭimokkha* and after the founding of the nuns' order, and thus must be the precipitation of a later historical development (*Vorschriften* 356-360; Hirakawa 37; I. Chung *Buddhist* 87-88). For the other *Vinayas* J. Chung (*Ursprung*) points out that surprisingly an instruction in the eight *gurudharmas* at the end of the *bhikṣuṇī* ordination is only recorded in the *Vinayas* of the Mahīśāsikas and Mūlasarvāstivādins (13). Based on this and other observations, he constructs the hypothesis that nuns were first ordained by nuns alone, which was prohibited soon, and that the eight *gurudharmas* were formulated at this time.<sup>4</sup> It makes sense that these rules were laid down to prevent women to escape male dominance or to ensure the traditional protection of women by men (Hüsken *Vorschriften* 356). It is important to note that J. Chung, however, does not rule out that a certain number of the eight *gurudharmas*, in a coherent form, were part of Mahāprajāpati's ordination (*Ursprung* 14). This could lead to the conclusion that Mahāprajāpati, if a historical figure at all, had not been the first, but due to her high descent (sister of the queen and foster-mother of Siddhartha Gautama) had been the most famous nun. As such she was well accepted by men and women of her time and deemed suitable to become the nuns story's central character.

O. v. Hinüber takes a different avenue. Based on the Theravāda *Vinaya*, he stresses that according to the narration the Buddha himself

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<sup>4</sup> This possibility has also been expressed by Damchö Diana Finnegan (*Flawless* 197) based on the narratives on nuns in the MSV: "We may also be surprised to see that in both these ordination narratives, Buddha Śākyamuni appears to simply entrust women to Mahāprajāpati for ordination, a fact that hints at greater practical autonomy and responsibility for the nuns' community than comes to light elsewhere."

did not ordain any nun personally but delegated this act from the very beginning to the monks (5), and argues “that the introduction of the order of nuns was indeed an event at the end of the period of early Buddhism, not too long after the death of the Buddha,” i.e., at a time when Mahāprajāpatī, older than the Buddha, had already passed away. He supposes that “the controversy on the admission of nuns might have been—speaking in modern historical terms—between two factions, whether or not to accept a group of female ascetics and their leader” (27).

Anālayo (*Theories*), in contrast, rejects hypostatizing an existence of nuns before Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī’s going forth and also opposes v. Hinüber’s thesis “that the order of nuns appears to have been founded only after the Buddha had passed away” (*Theories* 110). He considers v. Hinüber’s approach to contain “methodological shortcomings,” because of “restricting himself to the four Pāli *Nikāyas*” and not taking into account “the range of other discourses that document the existence of the order of nuns during the Buddha’s life time” (*Theories* 122). For a detailed list of works by scholars who have noted inconsistencies with the eight rules see Anālayo (*Mahāpajāpatī* 301).

Thus, from a historical-critical point of view it is legitimate to ask whether it is reasonable to base the revival of the *bhikṣuṇī* order on a text passage such as the eight *gurudharmas* whose authenticity is questioned. From a traditional point of view, however, the respective passage is canonical and considered to be the *Word of the Buddha* (*buddhavācana*), which cannot be ignored.

The second way I suggested in order to generate the flawless and perfect Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇī* vow is:

(2) An “ecumenical” ordination by Mūlasarvāstivāda bhikṣus and Dharmaguptaka bhikṣuṇīs

Setting aside the differences with regard to the legal procedures in the Vinaya traditions—already discussed by Kieffer-Pülz (*Presuppositions* 219–23) and Heirman (*Becoming*)—this approach requires a pluralistic view on the Vinaya tradition: It requires us not only to concede that other Vinaya traditions are acceptable, but also to give up the claim of one’s superiority over the other (Schmidt-Leukel). Here I defend such an approach, arguing that claiming one’s own Vinaya tradition to be superior has to be given up in order to allow one to meet with other Vinaya traditions on an equal footing, “equal with equal,” *par cum pari* (Swidler 15).

The first approach has already been discussed in Tsedroen & Anālayo, so I will only summarize its implications and then concentrate on the second approach, an “ecumenical” bhikṣuṇī ordination by Mūlasarvāstivāda bhikṣus together with Dharmagupta bhikṣuṇīs.

*Tibetan text and relevant Sanskrit fragments*

Both approaches are based on the first *gurudharma* and related to the understanding of ordination lineage in Tibetan Buddhism. This complicates the matter, as we shall see, due to the various perspectives from which one might approach not only the first *gurudharma* but the eight *gurudharmas* in their entirety and the ordination lineages. Moreover, we need to consider the fact that the eight *gurudharmas* are not only part of the *Mahāprajāpatīgautamīvastu* but also of the *Bhikṣuṇyupasaṃpadājñāpti*.

Both approaches to ordination are based on the Tibetan translation of the second part of the \**Bhikṣuṇīkarmavācanā* section in the *Vinaya-*

*ḥṣudrakavastu* ('Dul ba phran tshogs kyi gzhi)<sup>5</sup>, i.e., the *Bhikṣuṇyupasaṃpadājñāpti*, which corresponds to the respective passages partly preserved in the Sanskrit fragments, ms. c.25(R) of the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford, as well as on other primary and secondary sources. I will rely on the complete Tibetan translation of this text to discuss the implications of my findings for the future of women who practice Tibetan Buddhism and wish to become fully ordained.

### 1. Mūlasarvāstivāda Nuns Ordination by *Bhikṣus* Alone

In the *JBE* article (Vol. 20, 2013) “The *Gurudharma* on *Bhikṣuṇī* Ordination in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Tradition,” together with Bhikkhu Anālayo I have shown that based on the first *gurudharma*<sup>6</sup> there is clear canonical

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<sup>5</sup> For details on the 13 Kangyur editions of the Tibetan *\*Bhikṣuṇīkarmavācanā* (*\*Mahā-prajāpatīgautamīvastu* and *\*Bhikṣuṇyupasaṃpadājñāpti*) in the *Vinayaḥṣudrakavastu* see Tsedroen & Anālayo (754-755). In this article I will only refer to the Derge edition: D 6 ('dul ba), da, 100a3-120b1.

<sup>6</sup> According to the Tibetan translation based on the Sanskrit *\*Bhikṣuṇīkarmavācanā* the first *gurudharma* gives the advice that “after a woman has received the going forth and the full ordination from the *bhikṣus*, she should fully understand that she has become a *bhikṣuṇī*” (*bud med kyis dge slong rnam las rab tu byung zhing bsnyen par rdzogs nas dge slong ma'i dngos por 'gyur bar rab tu rtogs par bya'o*; D 6 ('dul ba), da, D 118b7), while the Sanskrit version reads that “the going forth, the full ordination and the state of being a *bhikṣuṇī* should be expected by a woman from the *bhikṣus*” (*bhikṣubhyaḥ śakāsād evaṃnāmike mātrgrāmeṇa pravrajyā upasaṃpat bhikṣuṇībhāvaḥ pratikāṃkṣitavya*); cf. Tsedroen and Anālayo 758-759. The Chinese Mūlasarvāstivāda translation omits this section as has been confirmed in consultation with Ann Heirman in a workshop at the University of Ghent March, 13-18, 2011. Tsedroen and Anālayo 753-760 explain that in the *BhīKaVā* this first *gurudharma* appears in three different places. Here we are mainly concerned with *gurudharma* 1 as it appears in the third place, i.e., at the very end of the instructions for the procedure to be adopted in the full ordination of *bhikṣuṇī*. Although the wording is almost the same in all three places, here however, due to the placement of

evidence that, if circumstances so require, *bhikṣus* can give all stages of women's ordination, starting with the going forth and reaching all the way up to the full ordination. If these steps are performed by Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣus*, the *bhikṣuṇīs* would automatically join the Mūlasarvāstivāda lineage.

The Mūlasarvāstivāda *Bhikṣuṇyupasaṃpadājñāpti* contains all stages of a woman's ordination up to the full ordination:

D 6 ('dul ba), da, 105a2:<sup>7</sup> The provision for going forth (Tib. *rab tu 'byung ba*, Skt. *pravrajyā*) which starts with going to the triple refuge (Tib. *skyabs gsum du 'gro ba*, Skt. *trīṇi śaraṇagamanāni*) and acceptance of the five precepts of a laywoman (Tib. *dge bsnyen ma'i bslab pa'i gzhi lnga*, Skt. *pañca upāsikāśikṣāpadāni*)

D 6 ('dul ba), da, 105b4:<sup>8</sup> The provision for *śrāmaṇerikā* precepts (Tib. *dge tshul ma'i bslab pa'i gzhi*, Skt. *śrāmaṇerikā-śikṣāpadāni*)

D 6 ('dul ba), da, 107a4:<sup>9</sup> The provision for a probationer (Tib. *dge slob ma*, Skt. *śikṣamāṇā*, Mvy 8721)<sup>10</sup>, i.e., Provision for

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the *gurudharma* at the end of the manual for the *bhikṣuṇī* ordination rite, the legal implications are different. Nevertheless, the wording in the Chinese translation of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* in the first two places is almost the same: "The *bhikṣuṇīs* should seek from the *bhikṣus* the going forth and the full ordination, the becoming of a *bhikṣuṇī*." T. 1451 at T. XXIV 351a1: 諸苾芻尼當從苾芻求出家, 受近圓, 成苾芻尼性 (repeated again at T. XXIV 351b21), cf. Tsedroen and Anālayo 746.

<sup>7</sup> For the Sanskrit parallel see Sch 248; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) 9 a1, which here continues fragmentary: *yasyāḥ kasyās cid bhikṣuṇyāḥ + + + + (2) nī ...*

<sup>8</sup> Sch 249; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) 10 a2: *tataḥ pa(3)ścād ...*. The term *śrāmaṇerikā* (Tib. *dge tshul ma*) is not explicitly attested here, but further below: Tib. D 6 ('dul ba), da, 106b2, Sch 251; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) 11 b4-5.

the the six precepts and the six subordinate precepts (Tib. *chos drug*<sup>11</sup> *dang rjes su 'brang ba'i chos drug*<sup>12</sup> *gi bslab pa*, Skt. *ṣaḍdharmāḥ ṣaḍanudharmāḥ śikṣāḥ*)<sup>13</sup>

D 6 ('dul ba), da, 108a6:<sup>14</sup> The provision for the full ordination (Tib. *bsnyen par rdzogs pa*, Skt. *upasampad*<sup>15</sup>)

D 6 ('dul ba), da, 108a6:<sup>16</sup> Granting consent [by the *bhikṣuṇīsaṃgha* to the *śikṣamāṇā*] to enter pure conduct, i.e., full ordi-

<sup>9</sup> Sch 251; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) text gap.

<sup>10</sup> It should be noted here that the term “*dge slob ma*” resp. “*śikṣamāṇā*” does not occur in the BhīKaVā, neither in the Tibetan nor in the Sanskrit version (gap in the Skt. ms.), but the rules of a *śikṣamāṇā* are clearly stated at the occasion of the request for the ‘*brahmacaryopasthānasamvṛti*’ from the *bhikṣuṇīsaṃgha*, cf. Tib. D 6 ('dul ba), da, 109b2: *chos drug dang rjes su 'brang ba'i chos drug gi bslab pa bslabs sam bslabs so*, Sch 254; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) 16 b4: *ṣaṭsu dharmeṣu ṣaṭsv anudharmeṣu śikṣāyām śikṣitā*. According to Guṇaprabha this extra probation for a female refers to “A time of observance for two years, between female novicehood and nunhood” (Jyväsjärvi 515).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Mvy 9320: Tib. *chos drug*, Skt. *ṣaḍdharmāḥ*.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Mvy 9321: Tib. *rjes su mthun pa'i chos drug*, Skt. *ṣaḍanudharmāḥ*.

<sup>13</sup> That the *śikṣamāṇā* precepts in the various Vinayas do not agree, has already been pointed out by (Hirakawa 53-54 note 17).

<sup>14</sup> Sch 251; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) text gap.

<sup>15</sup> Due to a gap in the BhīKaVā manuskript the Skt. term is not attested here, but further down in the section on the *karman* in the presence of the twofold *saṃgha*, cf. Sch 256; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) 19 a2, Tib. D 6 ('dul ba), da, 113a3: *bsnyen par rdzogs pa*. Cf. Mvy 8715: Tib. *bsnyen par rdzogs pa*, Skt. *upasampanna*.

<sup>16</sup> Sch 251; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) text gap. The Sanskrit parallel continues from Sch 251; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) 15a1 onwards. For the Tibetan parallel see: D 6 ('dul ba), da, 108b3: *de nas chos gos rnams byin gyis brlab par bya'o*.

nation (Tib. *tshangs par spyod pa la rim gror bya ba'i sdom pa*, Skt. *brahmacaryopasthānasamvṛti*)<sup>17</sup>

D 6 ('*dul ba*), *da*, 111a2:<sup>18</sup> Full ordination by both kinds of *saṃgha* (Tib. *dge 'dun sde gnyis ka las bsnyen par rdzogs pa*, Skt. *ubhayasaṃghād upasaṃpad*)

The actual full ordination of a *bhikṣuṇī* is performed by both *saṃghas*, i.e., by a *saṃgha* of at least ten *bhikṣus* and a *saṃgha* of at least twelve *bhikṣuṇīs*<sup>19</sup> by means of a legal act (Tib. *las*, Skt. *karman*) consisting of one motion and a resolution put three times (Tib. *gsol ba dang bzhi'i las*,

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<sup>17</sup> Tib. *tshangs par spyod pa la rim gror bya ba'i sdom pa*, also Tib. *tshangs par spyod pa la nye bar gnas pa'i sdom pa*, D 4118, ('*dul ba*), *wu*, 122b7. According to (Kieffer-Pülz *Presuppositions* 218) the resp. Skt. term *brahmacaryopasthānasamvṛti* corresponds with Pā. *vuṭṭhānasammuti* ("Erlaubnis zur Aufnahme," i.e., "agreement as to ordination") or resp. with *vuṭṭhāpanasammuti*, cf. (Hüsken 1997, 254, 260, 268, 418-419). Similarly, Roth (30) understands Skt. *upasthāpana-sammuti* as consent [to the female candidate] to enter into the ordination-proceedings. Jyväsjärvi (514) understands the term as "permission regarding the foundation of celibacy." According to Guṇaprabha "full ordination here means celibacy" (517). Cf. Sections on Nuns in the *Vinayasutravṛty-abhidhana-svavyakhyanam* ('*Dul ba'i mdo'i 'grel pa mngon par brjod pa rang gi rnam par bshad pa*), D 4119 ('*dul ba*), *zhu*, 49b2: '*dir bsnyen par rdzogs pa ni tshangs par spyod pa'o*. Thus *brahmacaryopasthānasamvṛti* is neither an ordination nor does Tib. *sdom pa*, Skt. *samvṛti* here mean "vow" in the sense of Skt. *saṃvāra*. For a detailed study on the term see (Ryōji 2015).

<sup>18</sup> Sch 256; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) 18 b5: *tataḥ paścāt sarvabhikṣusamghe ....*

<sup>19</sup> D 6 ('*dul ba*), *da*, 113a2-3; Sch 256; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) 18 b5-19 a2.

Skt. *jñāpticaturthakarman*).<sup>20</sup> At the end of the ceremonial rite (*karma-vidhi*) the exact time of ordination is ascertained.<sup>21</sup>

This means that although all the first stages of ordination are carried out by *bhikṣuṇīs* alone, the actual full ordination requires the presence of a *saṃgha* of ten *bhikṣus*. Although there is still mention of a female *upādhyāyikā* (Tib. *mkhan mo*),<sup>22</sup> she does not play an active role after the *bhikṣu saṃgha* has joined the *saṃgha* of twelve *bhikṣuṇīs*. Nor is there mention of a *bhikṣu upādhyāya*. After the *bhikṣus* have joined the *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha*,<sup>23</sup> the female ritual master, the *karmakārikā bhikṣuṇī* (Tib. *las byed pa'i dge slong ma*),<sup>24</sup> no longer guides through the ceremonial rites nor is it her task to declare the *karmavācanās*—instead a male *karmakāraka-bhikṣu* (Tib. *las byed pa'i dge slong pha*)<sup>25</sup> takes over.<sup>26</sup> At the end of

<sup>20</sup> D 6 ('*dul ba*), *da*, 112b1-113a6, Sch 258-259; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) 20 b4-21 b5. The term itself is attested in Tib. D 6 ('*dul ba*), *da*, 119b7, and in Skt. Sch 271; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) 31 b1. Pāli *ñatticatutthakamma*, a legal act whereby the motion is first formulated as a wish or supplication and then is followed three times by a declaration of the content of the motion, indicating it is accepted if none of the participants opposes. This in turn is followed with the decision as a fourth and final element following the motion.

<sup>21</sup> D 6 ('*dul ba*), *da*, 113a6-113b3; Sch 259; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) 21 b5-22 a5.

<sup>22</sup> D 6 ('*dul ba*), *da*, 111a6-7; Sch 256; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) 19 a4-19 b1.

<sup>23</sup> The *Bhikṣuṇyupasaṃpadājñāpti* does not clearly state who joins whom, but according to the *Las brgya rtsa gicg pa (Ekottarakarmaśataka)*, Tangyur, D 4118 ('*dul ba*), *wu*, 129a7-b1 to be gathered the *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* (Tib. *dge slong ma'i dge 'dun*) has to be increased by ten *bhikṣus*, if in a central region (Tib. *yul dbus*, Skt. *madhyamopadeśa*), or by five *bhikṣus*, if in a border region (Skt. *pratyanta*, Mvy 5268), and no more are available. Cf. Kieffer-Pülz (*Presuppositions* 223).

<sup>24</sup> D 6 ('*dul ba*), *da*, 108a7; Sch 251; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) text gap.

<sup>25</sup> D 6 ('*dul ba*), *da*, 111a3; Sch 256; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) 19 a1.

<sup>26</sup> In D 4119 ('*dul ba*), *zhu*, 48a1-7, Guṇaprabha says: “**In [the section on] full ordination, in the requesting for that etc., [‘a nun’ is understood] for those other than the presiding officer.** In the requesting for full ordination etc., a nun [is understood] in place of any monk other than the presiding officer (*karmakarṭr*). Beginning with requesting for full

the act of full ordination, i.e., after measuring the shade, ascertaining the season and the time of the day or night, the male ritual master announces the four kinds of guidelines, which the newly ordained *bhikṣuṇīs* have to observe henceforth:

1. The three supports of life (Tib. *Gnas gsum*, Skt. *Trayo niśrayāḥ*).<sup>27</sup>
2. The eight defeats (Tib. *Phas pham pa brgyad*, Skt. *Aṣṭau patanīyā dharmāḥ* resp. *\*aṣṭau pārājikā dharmāḥ*, cf. Mvy. 8358).<sup>28</sup>
3. The eight principles to be respected (Tib. *Bla ma'i chos brgyad*, Skt. *Aṣṭau gurudharmāḥ*).<sup>29</sup>

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ordination, the presiding officer can only be a monk, not a nun — this is stated. Earlier, a nun [can act] as the female presiding officer in requesting for full ordination: in the midst of the order of the nuns alone, it is she who grants the permission regarding the foundation of celibacy. **In this context, the assembled community.** Here, in the requesting for full ordination etc., the entire community of the monks is to be understood [to be present]. It means that motions such as the petition are to be carried out when both communities [of monks and nuns] have assembled.” (Jyväsjärvi 514). For the Tibetan parallel see D 4119 (*'dul ba*), zhu, 48a4-7: *bsnyen par rdzogs pa la ni de gsol pa la sogs pa'i las byed pa las gzhan pa'i'o zhes bya ba ni bsnyen par rdzogs pa la dge slong thams cad kyi gnas su dge slong ma blta bar bya ba ma yin te/ 'on kyang bsnyen par rdzogs pa la ni de gsol ba la sogs pa'i las byed pa po las gzhan pa'i dge slong gi gnas su dge slong ma'i bsnyen par rdzogs par gsol ba nas brtsams te 'dir las byed pa po'i dge slong nyid de dge slong ma ni ma yin zhes bya ba ni brjod par 'gyur ro/ /bsnyen par rdzogs pa gsol ba las snga rol du dge slong ma las byed pa po ste gang zhig 'dir dge slong ma'i dge 'dun 'ga' zhig gi dbus su tshangs par spyod pa la nye bar gnas pa'i sdom pa sbyin pa zhes bya ba'i don to/ / 'dir dge 'dun gyis bsnan par bya'o zhes bya ba ni bsnyen par rdzogs par gsol ba la sogs pa la dge slong gi dge 'dun slob dpon du gyur pa rtogs par bya'o/ /gnyis ka'i dge 'dun tshogs la gsol ba nas brtsams te las byed pa po ni dang po zhes bya ba'i don to.*

<sup>27</sup> D 6 (*'dul ba*), da, 113b3-114b1; Sch 259-261; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) 22 a5-23 b2.

<sup>28</sup> D 6 (*'dul ba*), da, 114b1-118b5; Sch 261-269; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) 23 b2-29 b3.

<sup>29</sup> D 6 (*'dul ba*), da, 118b5-119b5; Sch 269-270; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) 29 b3-31 a3.

4. The four principles for a recluse (Tib. *Dge sbyong gi chos bzhi*, Skt. *Catvāraḥ śramaṇikāraka dharmāḥ*).<sup>30</sup>

*The dilemma: the eight gurudharmas*

In the context of the first approach of nuns' ordination, however, we are only concerned with the third guideline: the eight principles to be respected, i.e., the eight *gurudharmas*. As explained above, the dilemma posed by that guideline is that from a *historical* point of view the authenticity of the eight *gurudharmas* is highly questionable. According to the *traditions*, however, they are canonical and appear in all *Vinayas* (Chung, J. *Gurudharma*).

From a *gender perspective* the question whether the eight *gurudharmas* were established to protect women or to entrench power, is obsolete today: they are largely experienced as discriminatory<sup>31</sup> because they subordinate the nuns to the monks.

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<sup>30</sup> D 6 (*dul ba*), *da*, 119b5-6; Sch 271; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) 31 a3-5.

<sup>31</sup> As Ute Hüsken has shown convincingly (1997, 480, 330-333) one could argue here that not only the *gurudharmas*, but the entire set of *Vinaya* rules disadvantages nuns compared to monks. Nevertheless, from an academic theologian's point of view, for practitioners the different set of *prātimokṣa* rules leaves some room for contemporary interpretation in terms of "the more rules the more merit" (Tib. *bsod nams*, Skt. *puṇya*) and thus no disadvantage, but an advantage to achieving the spiritual goal sooner. From a female practitioner's perspective the *gurudharmas* weigh more heavily because they subordinate the nuns' order to the monks' order. Until today, especially in Asia, the result is that in many places nuns sit behind monks, walk behind monks, and receive food and accommodation after them. Thus, they seem to be treated like second class human beings. The harmful psychological consequences of such treatments are addressed by Goodwin.

In the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya* tradition, however, the eight *gurudharmas* still carry weight. Until today many Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇīs* recite them at the end of each of their bimonthly confession ceremony (Tib. *gso sbyong*; Skt. *poṣadha*). Some contemporary Taiwanese Buddhist feminists have been the first to demand their abolition. The most radical attempt documented comes from the Taiwanese nun Ven. Chao Hwei. As Elise DeVido (107) points out, together with her disciples, Chao Hwei supports “efforts by the government and NGOs to work toward gender equality in Taiwan.” In 2001, during the opening ceremony of a conference Chao Hwei first read the eight *gurudharmas* out and then tore them up.

From a *Vinaya legal perspective* the eight *gurudharmas* are canonical, promulgated by the Buddha himself.<sup>32</sup> In the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition they are indispensable in order to revive the *bhikṣuṇī* order. According to the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* for the sake of completeness the

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<sup>32</sup> This implies that the Buddha—as depicted in the *Vinaya*—discriminated against women. When the *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* had become large in number, Mahāprajāpatī requested the Buddha to please revise the *gurudharma* 8, which rules that even if a *bhikṣuṇī* is fully ordained for a hundred years, she should to a *bhikṣu* who has been fully ordained that very day [speak] kind words, praise him, rise up, put her palms together and show respect. Mahāprajāpatī requested the Buddha to replace this with the principle of seniority regardless of gender. The Buddha refused, explaining that adherents of non-Buddhist sects would not greet women at all (D 6 (*'dul ba*), *da*, 121a1-b1). Cf. Gyatso (43 note 17); for the *Pālinvaya* cf. Hüsken (*Vorschriften* 347, 359). From an academic theologian's point of view this reason given by the Buddha seems to leave room for contextual interpretation: The Buddha did not reject the request of Mahāprajāpatī in principle, but referred to the social context, to the customs of his time, which did not allow monastic men to show respect to monastic women. But, because today, the customs are conversely and mutual respect is required, now the rule should be interpreted accordingly. Actually, in contemporary Buddhist communities of all three main strands of Buddhism, we already find examples of a respective change in the daily practice of local communities, i.e., that *bhikṣus* ask senior *bhikṣuṇīs* go first or bow to them in return.

*gurudharmas* have to be announced at the end of the ceremonial *upasampadā* rite. From this we can infer that as long as there were Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇīs*, perhaps up to the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century (Skilling 32-40), it was the custom that at the end of each full ordination ceremony a male *karmakāraka-bhikṣu* instructed the newly ordained *bhikṣuṇīs* to observe the eight *gurudharmas* henceforth. In other words, the nuns were not only taught to acknowledge the principle that *bhikṣus* are paramount but also to respect that *bhikṣuṇīs* should receive their ordination from *bhikṣus* (Tsedroen & Anālayo 758-759). Based on this, as mentioned above, if circumstances so require, *bhikṣus* can give all stages of women's ordination. Thus, for the revival of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇī* order, the first *gurudharma* is essential: It is *the* key to solve the problem how to revive the *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* in the Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition.

The Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, in the eight *gurudharmas*, neither mentions the need of a twofold *saṃgha* for full ordination nor the need to observe a probationary period. This reading rather appears to present a very early formulation of this *gurudharma*, when the *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* had not come into existence yet (for further details see Tsedroen & Anālayo; cf. Jyväsjärvi 193<sup>33</sup>).

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<sup>33</sup> Jyväsjärvi English translation differs here from the Sanskrit given in note 62. Cf. 'Dul ba'i mdo'i 'grel pa mngon par brjod pa rang gi rnam par bshad pa, D 4119 ('dul ba), zhu, 50a3-5: lci ba'i chos brgyad po rnam brjod par bya ste/ de rnam kyang / dge slong rnam las bsnyen par rdzogs pa dang / gnyen po'i tshogs dang gdams ngag yongs tshol dang / /dge slong med par gnas par byed pa dang / /gang du yang ni dbyar gnas khas len dang / /rgud pa rnam la dge slong bskul ba dang / /khro ba med dang gсар zhugs la phyag 'tshal/ /gnyis ka'i tshogs las thob bya min pa dang / /dgag dbye zhes bya ba lci ba'i chos rnam so (cf. Jyväsjärvi 518). The order of the *gurudharmas* in Guṇaprabha's list (nos. 4, 5, 6, and 8) deviate from the one in the Kangyur.

Furthermore, unlike the Pāli *Vinaya*,<sup>34</sup> the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* tells us that not only Mahāpajāpatī but also the 500 Śākya women<sup>35</sup> attending her received the full ordination by accepting the eight *gurudharmas* (Tsering 164). From a legal perspective an ordination through accepting the eight *gurudharmas* is considered an ancient rite, Tib. *sngon gyi cho ga*, Skt. *purākalpa* (cf. Mvy 9281), which cannot be employed for present-day ordination.<sup>36</sup> But—and this is very important to note—the eight *gurudharmas* also became a part of the current rite, Tib. *da ltar byung ba'i cho ga*, Skt. *vartamānakalpa*, which can or even has to be applied for present day ordination because it is the currently valid “law.” As such it must be observed. The eight *gurudharmas* are an integral part of the current valid gradual ordination manual and therefore *gurudharma 1* is a still valid permission (Tib. *gnang ba*) or prescription (Tib. *sgrub pa*) for

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<sup>34</sup> Anālayo (*Cullavagga* 409): In response to Mahāpajāpatī’s question, how to proceed in relation to the Sakyan women the Buddha said: “Bhikkhus, I authorize the giving of higher ordination of *bhikkhunīs* by *bhikkhus*” (414). Furthermore “[The Buddha said]: ‘Ānanda, when Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī accepted the eight principles to be respected, then that was her higher ordination’” (415).

<sup>35</sup> D 6 (*dul ba*), *da*, 104a7-105a2. Sch 248; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) folio 8: textgap—9a1. A further publication which will deal with this passage in more detail is under preparation. It is based on my paper “The Foundation of the Order of Buddhist Nuns According to the Tibetan translation of the *Kṣudrakavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya” presented at the Numata Conference “Buddhist Nuns in India” at McMaster University in Toronto on April 17, 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Most probably, the majority of Buddhist nuns would also not be interested in becoming ordained by accepting the eight *gurudharmas*. Actually, there seems to be some discussion among the Tibetan *śrāmaṇerikās* who do not want to become fully ordained because they are afraid that, when taking full ordination, they will have to follow the eight *gurudharmas* henceforth, which would reduce their freedom. On the other hand there are monks who have allegedly expressed their concern that keeping their 253 precepts is already difficult, and that it would become even more difficult for fully ordained nuns to keep their set of rules. Right now, because *bhikṣuṇīs* do not exist, they cannot break any of them.

women to receive the going forth and the full ordination from *bhikṣus* when no community of *bhikṣuṇīs* exists. In the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* there is no prohibition (Tib. *dgag pa*) of ordination by *bhikṣus* alone (cf. Tsedroen & Anālayo 760). This means that in accord with the four great authorities (Tib. *cher ston pa bzhi*, Skt. *caturmahāpadeśa*) there is space for interpretation<sup>37</sup>. The Buddha has not objected full ordination by *bhikṣus*, and it conforms with what is allowable, i.e., that *bhikṣus* are allowed to give full ordination when no *bhikṣuṇīs* are available.

## 2. Ecumenical Ordination by Mūlasarvāstivāda *Bhikṣus* and Dharmaguptaka *Bhikṣuṇīs*

In turning our attention to the second approach, we can reasonably ask: Are Tibetan Buddhists in a situation in which there is no *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha*? If you ask that question with regard to the Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda context only, the answer could be either: Yes, a Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* does not exist; the lineage is broken. Or it could be: No, although a Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* does not exist right now, the lineage is not broken—it exists latently, because the monk order exists—and thus the Mūlasarvāstivāda *prātimokṣa* vow lineage (Tib. *so sor thar pa'i sdom rgyun*) is still there, and the *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* can be revived.

Accepting this second answer the next question would be: How can it be revived, by *bhikṣus* alone as per the approach summarized above, or by an ecumenical ordination, which we will consider now?

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<sup>37</sup> In 2007, during the Hamburg congress, Geshe Rinchen Ngödrup pointed out that “actions that Buddha did not specifically disallow during his lifetime, but which accord with Buddha’s intentions, are to be allowed” (260-261). Cf. Kieffer-Pülz *Presuppositions* 225; Hüsken & Kieffer-Pülz 259; Anālayo *Bhikkhunī* 13; Lamotte *Treatise* 82.

At the time of the Buddha, different *Vinaya* schools had not yet emerged. Therefore, canonical texts do not cover how to deal with a community of Buddhist *bhikṣuṇīs* existing outside the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* tradition. Today there is a vibrant tradition of East Asian Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇīs* and with their help the Theravāda *bhikkhunī saṃgha* has been revived (Anālayo *Legality*).

The Tibetan Kangyur neither uses the term “different school” (Tib. *sde pa tha dad*, Skt. *nikyāyabheda*) nor the term “other schools” (Tib. *sde pa gzhan dag*, Skt. *nikāyāntariyā*, Mvy 5149).

The first split within the early Buddhist community is said to have occurred between the Sthaviras and the Mahāsaṅghikas. Traditional sources postdate the first schism by several centuries, i.e., between immediately after the death of the Buddha and the 3rd century B.C.E. under the auspices of King Aśoka (Cox 502-503). “Much remains here to be analysed, to distinguish what is real history and what is legend” (Braarvig & the Norwegian Institute of Palaeography and Historical Philology). Scholars assume that the earliest distinct Buddhist groups emerged through differences in ordination lineages and *Vinaya*. Chinese pilgrims reported that monks of different doctrinal persuasion resided together, unified by the same ordination lineage and *Vinaya*. But “relations even among schools distinguished on the basis of monastic disciplinary code were generally not hostile” (Cox 503).

As Kieffer-Pülz (*Presuppositions* 218) has pointed out “a practice of reintroducing monks’ ordination from other subgroups within the same tradition is attested in the Theravāda tradition.” Similarly Jackson has shown that in ancient Tibet monks who already possessed full ordination, “were making special efforts to preserve one or another particularly valued ordination lineage. Full nun ordination, by contrast, does not yet commonly exist, and to get it one must search outside the normal places. What these sources do show, however, is the legitimacy of going

to great trouble with—and even purposefully manipulating—the procedure of ordination for a good reason” (214). The texts analysed suggest “one’s existing full ordination must be formally given up before engaging in a second ordination ceremony” (214). On the other hand, Martin (247, note 20) points out that the Fifth Dalai Lama received a second ordination in a different Mūlasarvāstivāda lineage (Tsedroen *Generation* 209-210).

With regard to the ordination of nuns contemporary Tibetan *Vinaya*, scholars in general seem to take it for granted that an ordination by a twofold *saṃgha* requires *bhikṣus* and *bhikṣuṇīs* from the same tradition. When it comes to *bhikṣu* ordination, however, there are also historic and contemporary reports of monastic rites performed by followers of different *Vinaya* schools.<sup>38</sup>

It is thus not surprising that—especially in today’s increasingly pluralistic societies—the question arises whether Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣus* in the absence of Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇīs* can ask Chinese, Korean or Vietnamese Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇīs* to assist in fully ordaining Tibetan Buddhist *śrāmaṇerikās*. If they agree, would the newly ordained *bhikṣuṇīs* then belong to the Mūlasarvāstivāda or to the Dharmaguptaka school? It would be a vain endeavour to look for a ready-made solution for such a modern challenge in the ancient texts.

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<sup>38</sup> On October 10, 2011, the Gyalwang Karmapa referred to a famous text by the historian Taktsang Lotsawa (b. 1405), according to which *bhikṣus* of different *Vinaya* schools gathered in Vikramaśīla Vihāra constituted a quorum for full ordination. For further details see: *Stag tshang lo tsā ba* (78.24-79). Another precedent for multi-tradition ordination is that of Lachen Gongpa Rapsal (*Bla chen Dgongs pa rab gsal*). He was ordained after the wide-scale persecution of the Buddhist *saṃgha* in Tibet in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century by a *bhikṣu saṃgha* of three Tibetan and two Chinese monks (Chodron). Dan Martin (242) suggests that for the time being we should settle “the date of first entry of the monks of the Lowland Tradition [Gongpa Rapsal’s *Vinaya* descendants] into Central Tibet” for the year 978.

The question of how to revive full ordination for Buddhist nuns emerged in the 1980s. Two major nuns' orders (Theravāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda) had already ceased to exist for about 800 years. Due to globalization and increasing international contact among Buddhists from all over the world, Theravāda and Tibetan Buddhists became aware that contrary to their own traditions in East Asian Buddhism the Dharmaguptaka nuns' order still exists. Those nuns, however, belong to a different *Vinaya* school, neither to the Theravāda nor to the Mūlasarvāstivāda school but to the school of the Dharmaguptakas.

Although all the *Vinaya* traditions trace their roots back to the historical Buddha, the Dharmaguptaka nuns have a different ordination lineage, a different lineage of teachings and practice of the *Vinaya*. For centuries *Vinaya* scholars have considered these differences to be significant even if the differences among the schools are minor. Now, why do we care which lineage or *Vinaya* school the nuns belong to?

Lineages serve as proof of authenticity. In Tibetan Buddhism lineages are documented by drawing up chronological lists with names of certain key figures, outstanding masters, to ensure—and to prove—that the respective teaching reaches back to the Buddha himself, and is not newly created by Tibetans. To be authentic means to be genuine and credible.

Dharmaguptaka nuns have existed throughout Buddhist history, but Tibetans as well as Theravādins were not familiar with their origins and history and thus, in the beginning, questioned the authenticity of their lineage.

Belonging to a certain *Vinaya* school is a question of authority. All of them take it for granted that only those who belong to “their” school, i.e., those who have received ordination by contemporary holders of one

of their *Vinaya* lineages, and fulfill certain requirements, are authorized to carry out the different kinds of monastic rites.

The basic requirements to accept disciples and to officiate monastic rites are to be fully ordained (Tib. *bsnyen par rdzogs pa*, Skt. *upasampanna*) and to have the three virtues of being learned, respectable, and stable (Tib. *mkhas btsun brtan gsum*). This means being learned in the Tripiṭaka, especially in the *Vinaya*, being free from a major offense (Tib. *pham pa*, Skt. *pārājika*) of the monastic code (Tib. *so sor thar pa* [‘i *mdo*], Skt. *prātimokṣa*) and to be stable in the practice of *Vinaya* after having trained with a senior monastic for at least ten/twelve years.<sup>39</sup>

This is why, although we cannot expect to find an easy solution in ancient texts, the discussion needs to be based on those ancient texts and their proper understanding using our common sense. In other words, contextual hermeneutics has to be applied.

### 2.1 An argument for the validity of an ecumenical *bhikṣuṇī* ordination

In 2012 in Dharamsala, I introduced the following heuristic hypothesis to the scholars of the Tibetan Gelongma Research Committee:

The flawless and perfect Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇī* vow can arise when it is given by a Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣu saṃgha* together with a Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha*, because:

1. If two *saṃghas* apply the current *bhikṣuṇī* ordination rite only one vow (Tib. *sdom pa*; Skt. *saṃvara*)<sup>40</sup> arises

<sup>39</sup> For monks to advise nuns at least twenty years are required.

<sup>40</sup> On the Tibetan term *sdom pa* see the article by Kishino Ryōji.

(that is the *bhikṣuṇī* vow), whereas the male *saṃgha* is paramount;

2. Although the generation of the perfect vow depends on many conditions, a *prātimokṣa* vow arises from its specific substantial cause (Tib. *nye bar len pa'i rgyu*, Skt. *upādānakāraṇa*) within the continuum of the ordainee. It is not transferred from outside, from another person's continuum;
3. The school affiliation depends only on the monastic rite (Tib. *las kyi cho ga*, Skt. *karmavidhi*) followed during ordination.

In summary, why do these three premises entail the conclusion that the flawless and perfect vow can arise in this context?

The flawless and perfect *bhikṣuṇī* vow arises (1) because the male *saṃgha* is essential and sufficient to make the ordination legitimate; and (2) because the actual substantial cause of the vow does not depend on the *saṃgha* conferring the vow but on the person who takes the vow. The cause of the *bhikṣuṇī* lineage (provided it exists separately from the *bhikṣu* lineage) lies in the person ordained, not in the ordainer. And (3) in contrast to the *bhikṣu* ordination, in case of the *bhikṣuṇī* ordination—because *bhikṣuṇīs* play only a secondary role and are even completely dispensable—we can have an ordination performed by a male *saṃgha* of one tradition together with a female *saṃgha* of another tradition. Provided the ritual is performed correctly, for the women being ordained this will mean to become members of the monks' tradition: They will receive ordination and the perfect and flawless vow will arise.

The cause of the *bhikṣuṇī* vow lineage lying in the women, it is the Mūlasarvāstivāda ritual used during the ordination that determines the *Vinaya* school affiliation. Thus, all we need are the Mūlasarvāstivāda

monks to make the ordination legitimate. Let us consider the bases and implications of these three premises:

*The first premise*

*If two saṃghas apply the current bhikṣuṇī ordination rite, only one vow (Tib. sdom pa; Skt. saṃvara) arises (that is the bhikṣuṇī vow), whereas the male saṃgha is paramount.*

Regarding the understanding of lineage from a philosophical point of view, at the heart of this reasoning lies the assumption that the *bhikṣu* and *bhikṣuṇī* vow are of one nature (Tib. *ngo bo gcig*) or of one substance (Tib. *rdzas gcig*) and that there is only one lineage that counts, i.e., the *prātimokṣa* vows lineage (Tsedroen & Anālayo 761; Chodron 193). In the case of two different<sup>41</sup> lineages, *bhikṣu* and *bhikṣuṇī*, nuns ordained by both *saṃghas* would be holders of both lineages and would obtain both vows. If, on the other hand, the *bhikṣuṇī* lineage existed independently from the *bhikṣu* lineage, *bhikṣus* would not be involved in generating or validating the *bhikṣuṇī* lineage; it would be sufficient to confer the ordination by *bhikṣuṇīs* alone.

One argument against the possibility of reviving the Mūla-sarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇī* order is that the “stream of the *bhikṣuṇī* vow” (Tib. *dge slong ma’i sdom rgyun*), i.e., the *bhikṣuṇī* ordination lineage, is broken once and for all. Consequently, women would have to wait for the next Buddha. Nuns, however, have always, right from the beginning, been dependent on *bhikṣus*. Thus, a *bhikṣuṇī* lineage is not distinct from the *bhikṣu* lineage, because *bhikṣuṇī* ordinations never take place without

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<sup>41</sup> Not only different by name (Tib. *ming tha dad*), but also different by meaning (Tib. *don tha dad*).

*bhikṣus*. But they took place without *bhikṣuṇīs* throughout Buddhist history, not only at the time of the Buddha (see Anālayo *Cullavagga* 413-415), but also when transmitted to China (Heirman *Chinese*), in the later history of the Korean *bhikṣuṇīs* (*Chung Revival*), and in the history of the Taiwanese *bhikṣuṇīs* (DeVido 16). Full ordinations of women are usually performed with the help of senior *bhikṣus* who are well learned in the *Vinaya*. A *bhikṣuṇī* ordination lineage consisting of *bhikṣuṇīs* alone does not exist. The only stable factor in *bhikṣuṇī* ordination has always been the participation of *bhikṣu saṃghas*.

In autumn 2011, when I conducted a field research in India, the nuns of Jangchub Choeling Nunnery in Mundgod as well as the late Ven. Geshe Lobsang Palden (1935-2016)—at that time the abbot of Sera Je Monastery in Bylakuppe—had organized two all-day *Vinaya* symposia in their convents in order to give me the opportunity to discuss the *bhikṣuṇī* ordination with leading *Vinaya* scholars of the three main Gelugpa monastic universities. Over four days Tibetan nun scholars and I met with more than 20 leading *Vinaya* scholars from all six colleges of the three main Tibetan Gelugpa monasteries: Sera, Drepung and Ganden.

We wanted to find out what exactly is their understanding of a *bhikṣuṇī* lineage. Did Mahāprajāpatī have such a lineage? Another question discussed was the status of those women in India who for centuries were fully ordained by a twofold *saṃgha* of ten *bhikṣus* and twelve *bhikṣuṇīs*. Did they obtain one or two vow lineages? Finally, we asked about the situation of those *bhikṣuṇīs* who were ordained by *bhikṣus* alone. The *Vinayottaragrantha* (*'Dul ba ghung dam pa*) states that if a *śikṣamāṇā* is ordained through the legal act of a *bhikṣu*, she is deemed to have been fully ordained, even though those who fully ordained her committed a minor infraction.

“Bhadanta, if a probationary nun (Tib. *dge slob ma*, Skt. *śikṣamāṇā*) is ordained through the legal act of a *bhikṣu*, is she deemed to have been fully ordained?”

“Upāli, [she] is deemed to have been fully ordained, but those who ordained [her] commit a minor infraction.”<sup>42</sup>

Tibetan:

*btsun pa dge slob ma dge slong gi las kyis bsnyen par rdzogs par  
bgyis na bsnyen par rdzogs pa zhes bgyi ‘am /*

*u pā li bsnyen par rdzogs pa zhes bya ste / bsnyen par rdzogs  
par byed pa rnams ni ‘das pa dang bcas pa’o //*

Does such a *bhikṣuṇī* have a vow lineage? In Sera, although all scholars were sure that she has a lineage, the *Vinaya* scholars doubted whether it was a *bhikṣu* or a *bhikṣuṇī* lineage. Finally, Geshe Rinchen Ngödrup (260-261), who, in 2007, was one of the speakers at the International Congress on Buddhist Women’s role in the Saṃgha, and who, in 2012, represented the Tibetan Nuns in the Gelongma committee, said: “Whether the person to be fully ordained obtains the vow or the vow lineage of a *bhikṣu* or *bhikṣuṇī* has to be decided from the aspect of whether at the time when the actual vow arises the person to be ordained is a man or a woman. It cannot be decided from the aspect whether the person who gives the ordination is a male or female *saṃgha* member.”<sup>43</sup> At the end, all the geshees present agreed that this is probably correct.

<sup>42</sup> D 7 (*‘dul ba*), *na*, 240a2-3. Cf. Clarke (234-235) and Tsering (168-169).

<sup>43</sup> Tib. *sdom rgyun ni bsnyen rdzogs bsgrub bya pho mo’i cha nas dngos gzhi’i sdom pa skye tshe dge slong pha ma’i sdom pa’am sdom rgyun bzhag dgos pa red ma gtogs sgrub byed dge ‘dun pho mo’i cha nas ma red.*

This implies that gender is not the deciding factor. The main cause of the *bhikṣuṇī* vow and the vow lineage lies in the person to be ordained, not in the ordainer.

Monks have always been ordained by monks. Male ordination lineages do not list every monk ordained (specially not for the time in India), but consist of *upadhyāyas*, who became key figures in the transmission of *Vinaya* by functioning as ordination masters. What is crucial is the first Tibetan monk in those lineages and the name of the *upadhyāya* who ordained him. The Tibetan *bhikṣu* ordination lineage starts, for example, in India with the Buddha or his disciple Śāriputra, whereas the Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣu* ordination lineage starts with Buddha Śāykamuni or his disciple Upāli.

What could, in comparison, a *bhikṣuṇī* ordination lineage look like? It could start either with Buddha Śākyamuni, if the ordination masters are recorded, or, if those who were ordained are recorded, it could start with Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī, the first Buddhist nun. According to the Pāli *Vinaya*, other women were ordained by *bhikṣus* alone. But neither the names of those *bhikṣus* who ordained women nor the names of those women are transmitted. Thus, it seems anachronistic and dishonest to ask contemporary Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇīs* for the record of an exact *bhikṣuṇī* ordination lineage consisting of *bhikṣuṇīs* only and reaching back to the Buddha himself to prove the authenticity of their lineage.

Nevertheless, for Saṃghamittā, daughter of King Aśoka, who founded an order of *bhikkhunīs* in Sri Lanka around 230 B.C.E, Bhikkhunī Dhammapālā is recorded as her *uppajhāyā* and Ayupalā as her *ācāriyā* (Lamotte *History* 251).

Similarly, the Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇī* lineage is documented in the *Pi-ch'iu-ni chuan-shu*, the *Complete Records of the Biographies of*

*Bhikṣuṇīs*,<sup>44</sup> with the biography of Chu Ching-chien (ca. 292-ca. 361).<sup>45</sup> She “received the tonsure [required for all who leave the household life], cast off secular garb and accepted the ten fundamental precepts from the instructor . . . Chi-shan from Kashmir. . . . There were twenty-four other women of like mind, and together they established Bamboo Grove Convent” at Lo-yang (Tsai 17-18). In 317 the Kashmiri master Chi-shan returned to Kashmir. Forty years later, in the year 357 C.E., Ching-chien and the others, four altogether, became Buddhist nuns by accepting, from the Assembly of monks only, the obligation to observe all the monastic rules. Ching-chien is thus the first of the Buddhist nuns in China” (19). The ordination of these first four *bhikṣuṇīs* was given “on the basis of a *karmavācanā* (list of procedures) and of a *prātimokṣa* (list of rules) of the Mahāsāṃghika School,” although there is no evidence of the spread of these works, “the search for disciplinary rules for the *bhikṣuṇīsamgha* (community of nuns) continued . . . An important step for the *bhikṣuṇīsamgha* in China was the translation of a Sarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇīprātimokṣa* in 379-380 in Ch’ang-an” (Heirman *Chinese* 275).

This shows that at those early times the lines between the different *Vinaya* schools were often blurred. The school the ordination masters belonged to is not always clearly mentioned. The texts used for monastic rites may have come from different schools as they were hard to obtain. For the time being, the practitioners were glad to get hold of any text at all in order to be able to continue with their practice and the spread of the *dharma*. Otherwise it may have taken years, and life is short.

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<sup>44</sup> Fo-chiao Publ., Taipei, 1988. Fa-kuang Library no. 10620: 1. *Pi-chiu-ni chuan* (*Biographies of Bhikṣuṇīs*), compiled by Pao-ch’ang (sixth century); 2. *Hsu Pi-chiu-ni chuan* (*The Sequel Biographies of Bhikṣuṇīs*) compiled by Chen-hua (1911-). For the English translation of the two tables see <http://www.congress-on-buddhist-women.org/29.0.html> (accessed 3 October 2016).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Tsai 17-19.

“The question, however, whether an ordination only held before the *bhikṣusaṃgha* is valid, remained” (Heirman *Chinese* 276). There is no mention that these first nuns received the *śikṣamānā* precepts [from monks]. Given the context, we have to assume that the ordination procedure applied has been just the same as for monks, i.e., after going forth and receiving the ten precepts of a novice (which are the same for men and women) four *śrāmaṇerikās* obtained full ordination (*upasaṃpadā*) in front of monks alone, and thus, the first Chinese *bhikṣuṇīsaṃgha* was founded.

The validity of their *bhikṣuṇī* ordination, however, which had been set up by the foreign Buddhist monk T'an-mo-chieh-to<sup>46</sup> in 357 C.E., was not only challenged by the contemporary Chinese monk Shih Tao-ch'ang (Tsai 19), but also about 70 years later (429 C.E.) by “eight nuns from Ceylon” who came to the capital on the foreign boat of captain Nan-t'i from Sri Lanka (Tsai 53). The nuns stayed at the Luminous Blessing Convent. The doubt they had expressed was reported to the famous central Asian missionary monk Gunavarman (367-431) who “answered: ‘The precepts originally arose in the big community. If the original conditions are not fulfilled, this is no hindrance for ordination, as in the case of Gautami.’”<sup>47</sup> Three biographies of eminent nuns—Hui-kuo (no. 14; ca. 364-433), Seng-kuo (no. 27; b. 408), and Pao-hsien (no. 34; 401-477)—deal with the question of whether the first Chinese nuns were truly nuns, and whether the ritual had been carried out in the proper way (cf. Tsai 9, 37, 54, 62-63).

The first *bhikṣuṇī* in China listed in vol. 2 of the *Complete Records of the Biographies of Bhikṣuṇīs* is the Buddhist nun Hui-kuo (ca. 364-433).<sup>48</sup> In

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<sup>46</sup> The ordination was presided by a Kashmiri monk named Dharmagupta (Skilling 36).

<sup>47</sup> Stache-Rosen 22-23.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Tsai 36-38, biography no. 14.

the year 429, after the Sri Lankan nuns had raised their doubt about the validity of the ordination of the Chinese nuns, “Hui-kuo, Ching-yin and others of Luminious Blessings convent” consulted Gunavarman about the situation (Tsai 62). One of the questions raised with him was whether “by permitting women to receive the rules from the Assembly of monks only” an offense had been committed (Tsai 37). Gunavarman replies, if not being trained [as a *śikṣamāṇā*] for two years one may speak of an offence. At the same time, however, he makes clear that exceptions are possible, but “the correct view is that, if there is an established assembly present, one cannot but [has to] go along with all the requirements.” Furthermore, the biography of Seng-kuo, a disciple of the nun Hui-ts’ung of Kuang-ling on the north bank of the Yangtze River northeast of the capital tells us that “she herself had a few doubts” too. Therefore, she asked Gunavarman whether it is possible to go through the ritual a second time. Thereupon Gunavarman replied “receiving the monastic obligations a second time is of greater benefit than receiving them only once” (Tsai 54).

Finally, about the years 432-434 C.E.,<sup>49</sup> Hui-kuo, Seng-kuo, and the others were ordained in Nanking by a *bhikṣu* and a *bhikṣuṇī* saṃgha headed by the *bhikṣu* Sanghavarman, an expert on Abhidharma and Vinaya and successor of the Kashmiri master Gunavarman and the Sri Lankan senior *bhikṣuṇī* Devasarā<sup>50</sup> (Pā. Tessara<sup>51</sup> or Chin. T’ieh-so-lo<sup>52</sup>).

<sup>49</sup> There is some confusion of the dating. Tsai (37), in the biography of Hui-kuo gives the „ninth year (432)” and in the biography of Seng-kuo “the tenth year (433)” (Tsai 54), while Stache-Rosen, following the monks’ biography of Gunvarman, gives the “tenth year of the Yuan Chia period” (434). Cf. Skilling (47n127).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Thu’u bkwan (427): “Although it is reported that the Singhalese Bhikṣuṇī Devasarā and eleven *bhikṣuṇīs* from India [sic] travelled to China, I do not know whether a *bhikṣuṇī* vow lineage arose from them or not.” (*singha la’i de slong ma de ba sa rā sogs rgya gar nas dge slong ma bcu phrag gcig rgya yul du byon pa’i lo rgyus ‘dug kyang, de dag las brgyud pa’i dge slong ma’i sdom rgyun byung ma byung ma shes so*).

Ann Heirman points out that among other things, Guṇavarman is known for his translation of the *Szu-fen pi-ch'iu-ni chie-mo-fa* (T. 1434), a *karmavācanā* text for nuns of the Dharmaguptaka School, and that therefore S. Lévi and É. Chavannes share the view that Guṇavarman probably advocated an ordination according to the rules of this school (Heirman *Chinese* 276).

With regard to the question how many nuns came from Sri Lanka the accounts slightly differ. One story goes that together with two other senior *bhikṣuṇīs* Devasarā had been invited to come to China to head the quorum of eight *bhikṣuṇīs* who had arrived from Sri Lanka some years earlier. Those nuns had not yet attained the right age and lacked the quorum of ten persons. Therefore, Gunavarman advised them to learn the local language.<sup>53</sup> After Devasarā and the other two nuns arrived, they performed the *bhikṣuṇī* reordination as planned by Gunavarman who had passed away before he himself could do so. The other version reads:

[Four years later] in the tenth year (433), Nan-t'i, the ship captain, brought eleven more nuns from Sri Lanka, including one named Tessara. The first group of nuns, who by this time had become fluent in Chinese, requested Sanghavarman to preside over the ritual for bestowing the monastic rules on women at the ceremonial platform in

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<sup>51</sup> For the Chinese characters see Tsai (54, 134n94, 166).

<sup>52</sup> On T'ieh-so-lo see Stache-Rosen 46n72: "Tie-so-lo (Mathews, Dictionary Nos. 6332, 5459, 4099) is rendered by Lohasara in Franke: *Geschichte*, Vol. III, p. 268, and by Tissala in R. Shih: *Kao Seng Tschouan*, p. 138." According to Sujato (personal correspondence May 2, 2006 there is a Sinhalese name 'Tissara', which is a poetic variant of Skt. '*haṃsa*', swan. Based on "Chinese accounts at T50, N° 2059, p. 342, b11-c7; T50, N° 2063, p. 939, c6-p. 940, a3; and T50, N° 2063, p. 941, a8-b2," however, he suggests the rendering Ayyā Sārā instead of Tessara (Sujato 11).

<sup>53</sup> Stache-Rosen 22-24, 36.

Southern Grove Monastery. That day more than three hundred women accepted once again the full monastic obligation [this time from both the Assembly of Monks and the Assembly of Nuns]. “ (Tsai 54)

Thus, about 432-434 the dual-ordination *bhikṣuṇī* order was established under the guidance of the *bhikṣu* Sanghavarman and the *bhikṣuṇī* Devasarā in East Asia. This order still exists not only in mainland China, but in Taiwan, Vietnam, Korea, and many other countries as well.

For the Tibetan tradition so far no detailed records of a Mūla-sarvāstivāda *śrāmaṇerikā* or *bhikṣuṇī* lineage are known, although there exist individual accounts of *śrāmaṇerikās* and *bhikṣuṇīs* in Tibet (Skilling 36, Tsedroen *Generation* 206-207, Roloff *Red mda' ba* 276, 287, 299). Most texts simply refer either to a *mkhan brgyud*, a lineage of [male] *upādhyāyas*, or to a “stream of *prātimokṣa* vows” (Tib. *so sor thar pa'i sdom rgyun*; abbr. *so thar sdom rgyun*), i.e., a *prātimokṣa* vows lineage. Sometimes one also finds the term “*bhikṣu prātimokṣa* vow lineage” (Tib. *dge slong pha'i so sor thar pa'i sdom rgyun*) or “*bhikṣu* ordination lineages” (Sobisch *Bhikṣuṇī* 250) but so far I have not encountered any reference to a separate vow lineage of nuns (*bhikṣuṇīs*), probationary nuns (*śikṣamāṇās*), novice monks (*śrāmaṇeras*), novice nuns (*śrāmaṇerikās*), lay men (*upāsakas*) or lay women (*upāsikā*).<sup>54</sup> If the lineage of novices or laity was important on its own, one might have expected to find some respective discussion. The only place, however, where it is discussed, is in the *prātimokṣa* vows, which indicates that there is a special importance to *prātimokṣa* that does not attach to novice or lay vows.

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<sup>54</sup> Tib. \**dge slong ma'i*, *dge slob ma'i*, *dge tshul pha'i*, *dge tshul ma'i*, *dge bsnyen pha'i 'ang dge bsnyen ma'i sdom rgyun*.

This indicates that on the one hand the authority for *prātimokṣa* lineages is with the *bhikṣus* and that on the other hand there is a special importance to *prātimokṣa*, namely in the context of the Three Vows-Theories unique and central to Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>55</sup> The Three Vows are: the *prātimokṣa* vow (Tib. *so sor thar pa'i sdom pa*),<sup>56</sup> the *bodhisattva* vow (Tib. *byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa*), and the mantra vow (Tib. *gsang sngags kyi sdom pa*). The *prātimokṣa* vow, also referred to as individual liberation vow, consists of seven types of which the *bhikṣu* vow is considered the superior one.

Whoever has taken at least one of the seven individual liberation vows is considered a holder of a *prātimokṣa* vow but not necessarily authorized to confer the respective *prātimokṣa* vows. According to Gelugpa mainstream opinion you have to be a *bhikṣu* or *bhikṣuṇī* to study and teach the *Vinaya*, and to confer *prātimokṣa* vows to others. But it seems to be controversial whether one or the other is authorized to confer all seven types of *prātimokṣa* vows, and whether a lay person can confer the lay precepts.

If gender is not the deciding factor, and if the main cause of the *bhikṣuṇī* vow and the vow lineage lies in the person to be ordained and not in the ordainer, the answer should be that both, a *bhikṣu* as well as a *bhikṣuṇī*, could give all seven vows, although this of course is not the usual procedure. Monks and nuns are supposed not to stay under the same roof, but to live separately in male and female communities where they get their training in two slightly different sets of *prātimokṣa* rules.

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<sup>55</sup> For a detailed comparative study of this topic and the major traditions from the 12<sup>th</sup> through the 19th centuries see Sobisch (*Three-Vow*).

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Cutler & Newland (265): "The seven types of vows of individual liberation are listed according to the person receiving the vows . . ."

If you come into a situation, however, when there would not be any *bhikṣus* left, but only *bhikṣuṇīs*, the question might arise, whether nuns are authorized to ordain *bhikṣus* in order to restore the *bhikṣu* lineage. This would be more difficult than the other way round, because we have no textual evidence for such a case.

The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (*Chos mngon pa'i mdzod kyi bshad pa*) explains that in substance or in essence the vow of a *bhikṣuṇī* does not differ from that of a *bhikṣu*.<sup>57</sup> This is in line with a famous quote from the *Vinayottaragrantha*:

Upāli asks the Buddha:

“Bhadanta, if at the time of full ordination [a man] changes sex, is [that person] deemed to have been fully ordained?” The Buddha replies: “[That person] is deemed to be ordained. Transfer [her] in the midst of the *bhikṣuṇīs*.”

Tibetan:

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<sup>57</sup> D 4090 (*mngon pa*), *ku*, 176b1-3, *gnas bzhi pa*, *las bstan pa*, in relation to verse IV.14b-c: **In substance [the *prātimokṣa* vows] are of four types.** The vow of the *bhikṣu*, the vow of the *śrāmaṇera*, the vow of the *upāsaka*, and the vow of the *upavāsatha*. Each *prātimokṣa* vow presents distinct characteristics. In substance there are these four, because [in substance] the vow of the *bhikṣuṇī* does not differ from the vow of the *bhikṣu*; the vows of the *śikṣamāṇā* and the *śrāmaṇerikā* do not differ from the vow of the *śrāmaṇera*; and the vow of the *upāsikā* does not differ from that of the *upāsaka*. Why is this? **The name changes with the sex.** (*rdzas su rnam pa bzhi yin no* || *dge slong gi sdom pa dang* | *dge tshul gyi sdom pa dang* | *dge bsnyen gyi sdom pa dang* | *bsnyen gnas kyi sdom pa'o* || *de ltar nas sor thar pa'i sdom pa ni mtshan nyid so sor nges pa'i phyir rdzas nyid du rnam pa de bzhin yin te* | *dge slong gi sdom pa las ni dge slong ma'i sdom pa gzhan ma yin no* || *dge tshul gyi sdom pa las kyang dge slob* [*em. slob : slong D*] *ma dang* | *dge tshul ma'i sdom pa gzhan ma yin no* || *dge bsnyen gyi sdom pa las kyang dge bsnyen ma'i sdom pa gzhan ma yin no* || *ji ltar shes she na* | ***mtshan las ming ni 'pho ba'i phyir***. See Pruden 581, and Bapat and Gokhale xli.

*btsun pa/ bsnyen par rdzogs kar mtshan 'phos na/ bsnyen par  
rdzogs pa zhes bgyi'am/ bsnyen par rdzogs pa zhes bya ste/ dge  
slong ma'i nang du spos shig*<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> D 7 ('dul ba), na, 240 b4-5. It is striking, however, that unlike the Pāli source (Vin. III 35, 12-24) which Kieffer-Pülz kindly provided in preparation of the Hamburg Congress 2007 (<http://www.congress-on-buddhist-women.org/29.0.html>, accessed 29 October 2016; see also <https://suttacentral.net/en/pi-tv-bu-vb-pj1#112>, accessed 02 November 2016), the Tibetan Kangyur version does not explicitly raise the question what happens when a woman changes sex. But perhaps this reverse question was not felt to be important, because from a male perspective when a woman becomes a man, everything is as usual. Kieffer-Pülz (*Re-Ordination* 6, note 19) notes (with reference to Hüsken *Vorschriften* 66, Kieffer-Pülz *Lebensjahre* 228 f., and Sujato 127, note 39) that she is leaving “the sex change rules aside here.” For our discussion, however, it is important to note that the 'Dul ba *gshung bla ma* (*Vinayottaragrantha*), D 7 ('dul ba), pa, 219a3-6, states: “Bhadanta, the Bhagavān said that after a *bhikṣuṇī* renounced her training, it is not appropriate to grant her once more full ordination to become a *bhikṣuṇī*; those who once again grant going forth or full ordination to any [former] *bhikṣuṇī*, come to a minor infraction (Tib. *nyes byas*, Skt. *duṣkṛta*). But in case they grant going forth and full ordination to a *bhikṣuṇī*, after she renounced her training and descended [from being a *bhikṣuṇī*], even if she is fully ordained, isn't there an offense to those?” The Blessed One said: ‘There is. It is like this: If after a *bhikṣuṇī* renounced her training and descended [from her being a *bhikṣuṇī*], going forth and full ordination are granted to the one who changed sex, [i.e., to the now man], there is no offense.’ (*btsun pa/ bcom ldan 'das kyis dge slong mas bslab pa phul nas/ slar dge slong ma'i dngos por bsnyen par rdzogs su mi rung ste/ dge slong ma gang dag gis slar rab tu phyung ngam/ bsnyen par rdzogs par byas na/ de dag nyes pa dang bcas so/ /zhes gsungs na/ dge slong mas bslab pa phul te babs pa las/ de de dag gis rab tu byung zhing bsnyen par rdzogs par bgyis na/ bsnyen par rdzogs pa yang lags la/ de dag la yang nongs par mi 'gyur ba mchis sam/ bcom ldan 'das kyis bka' stsal pa/ yod de/ de 'di ltar/ dge slong ma de bslab pa phul te babs pa las/ de'i mtshan 'phos te mtshan 'phos par gyur pa de/ rab tu byung zhing bsnyen par rdzogs par byas na/ nyes par mi 'gyur ro*). It seems that this statement neither refers to a *bhikṣuṇī* nor to a laywoman, but to a now man, who emerged from a former *bhikṣuṇī* who after having renounced the training and leaving the order changed sex. But unlike in the Theravāda tradition in the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition “formal renunciation” does not only exist for monks, but also for nuns (cf. Kieffer-Pülz *Re-Ordination* 9, 24); *Pārājika* (Tib. *pham pa*) 1, resp. *pataniya-dharma* (Tib. *phas pham pa*) 1 as announced at the end of the *Bhikṣuṇyupasaṃpadājñapti* refers to a *bhikṣuṇī* who nei-

Today all schools of Tibetan Buddhism seem to accept that *prātimokṣa* vows (from their second moment onward) are *avijñāptirūpa* (Tib. *rnam par rig byed ma yin pa'i gzugs*), imperceptible form. Whether one becomes a monk or a nun depends on the physical basis (Tib. *lus rten*). The ordination rituals prescribe how the sex characteristics have to be validated. After their ordination monks and nuns are advised to follow one of the two gender-specific monastic codes. Ambiguous gender is seen as an impediment (Tib. *bar chad kyi chos*, Skt. *āntarāyika dharma*) for ordination. If one changes sex, no re-ordination has to be provided—the person just changes the community (*saṃgha*). Why then is a male *saṃgha* seen as ranking first? On this question the living Tibetan tradition keeps two standard replies ready:

1. The male body is superior;
2. The male *saṃgha* is senior (Tib. *bslab pa rgan pa*) to the female *saṃgha* because the *bhikṣu saṃgha* was founded first.

At the time of the Buddha, Buddhist women already questioned this gender-biased hierarchy. Mahāprajāpatī suggested that monks and nuns show respect to each other, regardless of gender.<sup>59</sup> The Buddha rejected her appeal making the concession to the expectations of the then Indian society that women need to be placed under male authority. Furthermore, ordination by *bhikṣus* alone is considered valid, although ordina-

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ther renounced the training, nor revealed that her training has been weakened (Tib. *bslab pa ma phul lam bslab pa stobs chung ngam ma bshams pa*, Skt. *śikṣām apratyākhyāya śikṣādaurbalyam*; D 6 ('*dul ba*), *da*, 115a1; Sch 261-262; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) 24 a5-24 b1). Similarly the *Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣasūtra* as given in *Dpe bsdur ma* ('*dul ba*), vol. 9, p. 7, speaks about a *bhikṣuṇī* who has not renounced the training, not damaged [the training] (*bslab pa ma phul bslab pa nyams par ma byas pa*). Cf. Hirakawa 103.

<sup>59</sup> D 6 ('*dul ba*), *da*, 120 b1-121 b1.

tion by *bhikṣuṇīs* alone is considered invalid.<sup>60</sup> Thus, at present, *de facto* and *de jure* the *bhikṣu saṃgha* is considered first in rank.

### *The second premise*

*Although the generation of the flawless and perfect vow depends on many conditions, a prātimokṣa vow arises from its specific substantial cause (Tib. nye bar len pa'i rgyu, Skt. upādāna-kāraṇa) within the continuum of the ordainee. It is not transferred from outside, from another person's continuum.*

The formulation of the second premise is standard Tibetan doctrine. Tsongkhapa states in his *Essence of the Ocean of Vinaya* ('Dul ba rgya mtsho'i snying po)<sup>61</sup> that there are two ways of characterizing the nature of *prātimokṣa* vows: it is either a kind of form or the continued intention to abandon non-virtue. Form (Tib. *gzugs*, Skt. *rūpa*, Mvy 1859) cannot be substantially caused by mind. Thus renunciation (Tib. *nges par 'byung ba*,

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<sup>60</sup> This is at least what is generally assumed. According to Geshe Rinchen Ngodup (personal communication in Bodhgayā on December 13, 2014) the MSV (*karmavastu*) does not explicitly state that the *bhikṣuṇī* vow would not arise when given by a *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* alone. The fact that the ordination would not be valid can only be deduced from the first *gurudharma*, which says that the going forth and the full ordination have to be received from the *bhikṣus*.

<sup>61</sup> Tsong kha pa (72 a3-4): "nges 'byung bsam pa'i rgyu byas nas// gzhan gnod gzhi dang bcas pa las// ldog pa de yang lus ngag las// gzugs can yin zhes 'dod pa dang// spong ba'i sems pa rgyun chags pa// sa bon dang bcas pa yin no zhes// 'dod pa'i tshul ni rnam pa gnyis" (It is, with thought of renunciation acting as cause, to turn away from harming others and the basis [for harming others]. Our higher and lower schools have two modes of assertion: that it is form, being *karma* of body and speech; or that it is the continued will to abandon [non-virtue] together with its seeds). For a detailed discussion of the various positions of various Indian Buddhist tenets on the nature of *prātimokṣa* vows see (Sobisch *Three-Vow* 36-49, 311).

Skt. *niryāta*) can only be the substantial cause of a *prātimokṣa* vow when accepted as the continued intention to abandon non-virtue.<sup>62</sup> Tsonawa Sherab Zangpo (Tib. Mtsho sna ba Shes rab bzang po) explains in his ‘*Dul ba mtsho ṭik* (ka, 15a1-3) that three kinds of causal motivation (Tib. *rgyu’i kun slong*) are needed in order to generate a *prātimokṣa* vow: (1) the wish to take it (Tib. *len par ‘dod pa*); (2) the understanding to have obtained it (Tib. *‘thob par shes pa*); and most important; (3) a stable intention to transcend suffering (Tib. *mya ngan las ‘das pa’i bsam pa brtan po*).<sup>63</sup> In this regard he also refers to the *Vinayasūtraṭīkā* where Dharmamitra says that “without a stable intention to transcend suffering the vow will not arise.”<sup>64</sup> Therefore, Tibetan Buddhist ordination masters emphasize that generating the vow mainly depends on the ordainee’s attitude.<sup>65</sup> The vow is not something transferred from outside, it does not come, for example, from the preceptor’s continuum. The main cause that generates the vow—whilst depending on many other causes and conditions—is rather renunciation.

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<sup>62</sup> Among Tibetan *Vinaya* scholars it seems to be undisputed that vows at the desire realm level have form. See Jamgön Kongtrul Tayé (87).

<sup>63</sup> That is *niryāta* (Tib. *nges par ‘byung ba*), the thought of definite emergence from the cycle of existence, i.e., renunciation.

<sup>64</sup> D 4120 (*‘dul ba*), ‘u, 1b1-yu, 388a7: “*mya ngan las ‘das pa’i bsam pa brtan po med par sdom pa mi skye bas skyabs su ‘gro bas mya ngan las ‘das pa bsam pa brtan po sgrub par byed de*” (Generate a stable intention to transcend suffering by taking refuge, because without a stable intention to transcend suffering the vow will not arise.); cf. Mtso na ba (ka, 15b3-4).

<sup>65</sup> Mtso na ba (ka, 12b2ff) based on the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, D 4090 (*mngon pa*), ku, 86a discusses the nature of *prātimokṣa* vows in relation to the six causes, the five results and the four conditions.

*The third premise*

*The school affiliation depends on the monastic rite (Tib. las kyi cho ga, Skt. karmavidhi) followed during ordination.*

The third premise is based on the assumption that there are many inner and outer causes and conditions of the generation of flawless and perfect *prātimokṣa* vows. What makes one specifically a Mūlasarvāstivāda nun is the fact that one was ordained according to the Mūlasarvāstivāda monastic rite. There are many essential elements required for full ordination, which are explained in the monastic rites for *bhikṣu* and *bhikṣuṇī* ordination.<sup>66</sup> Tsonawa comes to the conclusion that there are seven differences between the *bhikṣu* and *bhikṣuṇī* ordination ritual.<sup>67</sup> Neither the *bhikṣu* nor the *bhikṣuṇī* ordination ritual explicitly states that the ten *bhikṣus* or twelve *bhikṣuṇīs* have to belong to the Mūlasarvāstivāda school.

Thus, the question is whether in exceptional cases “visiting *bhikṣus*” (Tib. *glo bur du ‘ong pa*,<sup>68</sup> Skt. *āgantuka*, Mvy 8746), or respectively visiting *bhikṣuṇīs*, from a different *Vinaya* school could step in to assist in ordination, if the required number of resident monastics is insufficient. The Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* distinguishes between one who lives apart (Tib. *tha dad [du] gnas pa*, Skt. *nānāsaṃvāsika/~kā*; cf. Mvy 8757) and one dwelling in communal life (Tib. *gzhi mthun par gnas pa*, Skt. *samānasaṃvāsika*) with other monastics.<sup>69</sup> Monks dwelling in communal

<sup>66</sup> Jamgön Kongtrul Tayé (95-97) explains ten elements for *bhikṣu* ordination.

<sup>67</sup> Mtso na ba (*ka*, 119a3).

<sup>68</sup> Tib. also: *blo bur du ‘ong pa*. Cf. Hu-von Hinüber 468-469; Kieffer-Pülz *Sīmā* 366.

<sup>69</sup> Regarding the *nānāsaṃvāsika/~kā* see Edgerton, BHSD, s.v.: “one who lives apart (from the generality of monks or nuns); under restrictions which bar him or her from certain rights of association (such as participating in the *uposatha* along with the rest).” Härtel (79 note 6) adds that this term refers to a person under suspension, someone who has

life (Skt. *Samānasaṃvāsika*)<sup>70</sup> can be either resident monks (Tib. *gnyug mar gnas pa*, Skt. *naivāsika*, Mvy 8745) or visiting monks (Tib. *glo bur du 'ongs pa*, Skt. *āgantuka*, Mvy 6937).

In the Poṣadhavastu, D 1 ('*dul ba*), ka, 148b4-5, Upāli asks the Buddha:<sup>71</sup>

Reverend, if resident monks hear that visiting monks, skilled in Sūtra, skilled in *Vinaya*, and skilled in *Mātrkā* are about to come, how should they behave toward these (scholars)?

Tibetan:

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committed a *saṃghāvaśeṣa* offence (Tib. *lhag ma*) and undergoes *mānatrā* resp. *parivāsa* (Tib. *spo ba*, Mvy 8649). Being one who lives/stays apart is also one of the impediments, i.e., an obstructive condition for ordination. In relation to women the Sanskrit term *nānāsaṃvāsikā* is also translated as *so sor gnas pa* in Tibetan. See D 6 ('*dul ba*), da, 109a7, Sch 253; Kṣudr-v(Bhī) 16 b2. *Bhikṣuṇī Vinayavibhaṅga* D 5 ('*dul ba*), ta, 133a2-3: "*tha dad du gnas pa de dag la zhes bya ba ni so sor gnas pa la'o*." Hu-von Hinüber (369) understands the term *nānāsaṃvāsika* as "zeitweilig aus dem Orden ausgeschlossen" (suspended from the order) as distinguished from *asaṃvāsika* (Tib. *mi gnas pa / gnas par mi bya ba*, Mvy 8758), "gänzlich aus dem Orden ausgeschlossen" (utterly expelled from the order) (369, note 9). Kieffer-Pülz (*Śimā* 53) points out that according to (later) traditional Theravāda *Vinaya* interpretation *nānāsaṃvāsika* also refers to somebody who [due to a different *Vinaya* interpretation] sorted himself out of a legal community, i.e., every Theravāda monk considers himself *samānasaṃvāsika* in regard to his own legal community, whereas he considers monks of other legal communities as *nānāsaṃvāsika*. However, it seems that in contemporary Theravāda practice there are various understandings of the meaning of the respective terms (*samāna*)*saṃvāsika* (Tib. *gzhi mthun par gnas pa*), *asaṃvāsika* (Tib. *mi gnas pa / gnas par mi bya pa*) and *nānāsaṃvāsika* (Tib. *tha dad du gnas pa / so sor gnas pa*).

<sup>70</sup> On this term in the Theravāda *Vinaya* see the recent article by Kieffer-Pülz (*Samana-vassika*).

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Hu-von Hinüber (354-355).

*btsun pa 'di lta ste dge slong gnyug mar gnas pa dag gis dge  
slong glo bur ba mdo sde 'dzin pa dang / 'dul ba 'dzin pa dang /  
ma mo 'dzin pa dag mchi'o zhes thos na/ de dag gis de dag la ji  
ltar bsgrub bar bgyi.*

And the Buddha replies:

Upāli, for the benefit of the visiting monks, skilled in Sūtra, skilled in Vinaya, and skilled in Mātrkā, the (resident) monks should go up to two and a half yojanas<sup>72</sup> to meet (and welcome) them with umbrellas (Skt. *chatra*), victory banners (Skt. *dhvaja*), and flags (Skt. *patākā*).

Tibetan:

*nye bar 'khor/ dge slong de dag gis dge slong glo bur ba mdo sde  
'dzin pa dang / 'dul ba 'dzin pa dang / ma mo 'dzin pa dag gi don  
du dpag tshad phyed dang gsum du gdugs dang / rgyal mtshan  
dang / ba dan la sogs pa dag gis bsu bar bya'o/ / (148b5-6)*

This can be interpreted as a clear advice to practice hospitality<sup>73</sup> and to show respect to visiting monks. Today, for example, leading senior Dharmaguptaka nuns, skilled in the Tripiṭaka and experienced in functioning as ordination masters in Taiwan, have offered to come to India and to conduct *śikṣamāṇā* ordination for Mūlasarvāstivāda *śrāmaṇerikās*. They even offered to follow the Mūlasarvāstivāda *śikṣamāṇā* rite instead of the Dharmaguptaka rite because it also exists in Chinese translation, and a comparison of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *śikṣamāṇā* precepts with their Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇī* precepts has shown that they keep all those

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<sup>72</sup> About 18,5 kilometers.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Hu-von Hinüber (229) who stresses that the Buddha stipulated hospitality and respect toward visiting Vinaya experts.

precepts. The question is whether this kind offer can be accepted in order to revive the Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇī* order.

In 2012, during my meeting with the *Vinaya* research committee in Dharamsala, I voiced the opinion that in general it should be possible for Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇīs* to assist during full ordinations. Although there are minor differences between the various *Vinaya*piṭakas, I think that there is no difference with regard to the nature of the vows of the followers of different *Vinaya* traditions. As shown using the example of gender reassignment, the *bhikṣu* and *bhikṣuṇī* vows are of the same nature or substance. Otherwise, a person who has undergone a change of sex would need to be newly ordained. On the basis of this assumption, I argue that the nature of the vows of Buddhist monks and nuns of different *Vinaya* traditions are comparable. Obviously, different *Vinayas* have developed their tradition-specific characteristics, but in essence all of them reach back to the same source, which is the Buddha himself and the first monastic community. For the Buddha, the most important thing seems to have been that his followers live in harmony and support each other.

School affiliation mainly depends on place, time, language, and the ordination masters (Tib. *slob dpon*, Skt. *ācārya*).<sup>74</sup> But following a dif-

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<sup>74</sup> The MSV Tibetan tradition refers to five kinds of *ācāryas*. This list does not include the female counterparts. See D 1 ('dul ba), ka, 48 b5-49 a1: "bcom ldan 'das kyis bka' stsal pa/ slob dpon ni lnga/ mkhan po ni gnyis so . . . rab tu 'byin par byed pa gang yin pa dang/ bsnyen par rdzogs par byed pa gang yin pa'o." A definition for the *upādhyāyikā* (Tib. *mkhan mo*) is given in the *Bhikṣuṇī Vinayavibhaṅga*, Kangyur (*Dge slong ma'i 'dul bar rnam par 'byed pa*) D 5 ('dul ba), ta, 249a6: "mkhan mo ni, tshul khrims dang ldan pa mang du thos pa yin no" (*upādhyāyikā*: somebody endowed with ethical discipline and very learned). The female term *ācāryikā* (Tib. *slob dpon ma*) occurs in the *bhikṣuṇī* ordination manual but is not further explained. At the suggestion of Petra Kieffer-Pülz I started reading all those passages in the Tibetan version of the *Bhikṣuṇī Vinayavibhaṅga* (D 5, Dpe vol. 9, Tib. *Dge slong ma'i 'dul bar rnam par 'byed pa*) which relate to the various stages of Buddhist wom-

ferent *Vinaya* school does not necessarily imply disharmony with other schools. Followers of different traditions may be in harmony, which is also one of the basic conditions for the validity of a Buddhist monastic legal act and an overarching Buddhist principle right from the beginning.

This does not refer to disharmony in the sense of a friction, but to the traditional convention that followers of different monastic codes cannot legally perform together any ecclesiastic act that is then recognized as valid by the members of their respective schools. Traditionally it would be considered a “mix” of two *Vinaya* traditions (cf. Hüsken & Kieffer-Pülz 263). According to Tibetan *Vinaya*, a harmonious *saṃgha* (Tib. *dge 'dun mthun pa*,<sup>75</sup> Skt. *samagrasaṃgha*) is defined as a *nikāya* (Tib. *sde pa*) consisting of four or more monks agreeing in view and behavior (Tib. *bzhi sde yan chad kyi btsun pa lta spyod mtshungs pa*). Thus, the question in today's context is whether and how *saṃghas* of different *nikāyas* and different *Vinaya* schools could agree in view and behaviour and thus could carry out a valid ecclestical act together.

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en's ordination in order to find more details on the role of the *upādhyāyikā*. It turned out to be a very difficult and time consuming task, because especially in the field of the 180 expiation-offences (Tib. *ltung byed kyi chos*, Skt. *pāyattikadharmā*) the *Bhikṣuṇī Prātimkṣasūtra* (D 4, Dpe vol. 9, Tib. *Dge slong ma'i so sor thar pa'i mdo*) and the *Vibhaṅga* do not match. For a long time it was questioned whether the *Bhikṣuṇī Vinayavibhaṅga* belongs to the Mūlasarvāstivādins at all, cf. Claus Vogel, Tsedroen (*Brief* 56). But as Shayne Clarke reported during the Numata Conference “Buddhist Nuns in India” (2011), we seem to be confronted with two or even three different regional branches of the *Mūlasarvāstivādins*. A table of concordance of the respective rules that need to be considered in this context has recently been published by Kishino (185).

<sup>75</sup> Mvy 9269: Skt. *samagra*, Tib. *'thun pa, mthun pa*; Mvy 5318: Skt. *samagra*, Tib. *tshogs pa'am mthun ba*. Kieffer-Pülz (*Sīmā* 471) considers *samagra* synonym with *sāmagrī*, which she translates with German „Vollzähligkeit,” i.e., completeness; complete in number (365). Cf. Mvy 2009: *sāmagrī*, Tib. *'du 'phrod dam tshogs pa* (assemblage, congregation).

We have seen that people from one *nikāya* are not forbidden to help with the ordination of someone from another *nikāya*. We have also seen that the Buddha explicitly advised to show respect to visiting monks from other *nikāyas*, so we know now that there are certain possibilities of interaction between *nikāyas*. Therefore, next we have to ask specifically whether ecumenical ordination could be one of them. I will argue that in exceptional cases, if there is good reason, it is not only admissible but even the duty of *nikāyas* of different *Vinaya* schools to cooperate with and support each other.

## 2.2 Recapitulating the second approach (ecumenical ordination)

In brief, for the following reasons the flawless and perfect *bhikṣuṇī* vow can be generated by the second approach:

1. Because the *bhikṣu saṃgha* is considered first in rank and because whether one obtains the *bhikṣu* or *bhikṣuṇī* vows does not depend on the gender of those conducting the ordination rite but on the gender of the person who receives the vow. The lineage of the nuns is that of the monks, due to legal regulations, however, full ordination should not be given by monks alone, unless there is reason for an exception;
2. Because it depends mainly on the attitude of the candidate, whether the vows arise, i.e., from the wish to take it, the understanding to have obtained it, and most important, a stable attitude of renunciation;
3. Because the fact whether one becomes a Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇī* depends on whether the *bhikṣuṇī* ordination rite (Skt. *bhikṣuṇyupasaṃpadājñāpti*) is that of the Mūlasarvāstivāda school

and whether the (at least three leading)<sup>76</sup> monks joining the nuns' community for the full ordination belong to the Mūlasarvāstivāda *saṃgha*.

Because all *Vinaya* traditions trace their roots back to the historical Buddha, it should be safe to assume that the ordination lineages of different schools are of one nature or substance. It follows that under present circumstances it would be appropriate for monastics of other *Vinaya* traditions to step in and complement the resident *saṃgha* for the sake of performing a *saṃgha* act. Before an ecumenical ordination could take place, however, it would be necessary to reach agreements on how to proceed, a clear understanding of the process by everyone involved, and what exactly the purpose of this *saṃgha* act is. Because different *Vinaya* schools would be involved and for the benefit of upholding each and every tradition, these questions would need to be discussed and answered in intensive preceding dialogues. Coming together in this constellation is needed only once in order to revive the Buddhist nuns' order of the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition.

As has already been mentioned, such an approach would require a pluralistic view: it would not suffice merely to concede that other *Vinaya* traditions have value. Any claim for superiority of one's own *Vinaya* tradition would have to be renounced and one would have to meet with other traditions on an equal footing. If an ecumenical ordination is conducted and both the monastic rite and the *bhikṣu saṃgha* are Mūla-

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<sup>76</sup> It should be noted that the ordination lineage of H.H. the Dalai Lama and all the monks who were ordained by him reaches back to an ordination by three Tibetan (Mūlasarvāstivāda) monks and two Chinese (Dharmaguptaka) monks (Chodron 183-190). As Chodron points out, in 709, Tang emperor Zhongzong issued an imperial edict declaring that all monastics must follow the Dharmaguptaka, "and since then Dharmaguptaka has been the sole *Vinaya* tradition followed throughout China, areas of Chinese cultural influence, as well as in Korea and Vietnam" (188-189). Cf. Wangyal.

sarvāstivāda, and the accompanying Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* agree,<sup>77</sup> in my view, a perfect Mūlasarvāstivāda vow would arise, depending on the *Vinaya* hermeneutics applied, i.e., on the way how practitioners understand and interpret the *Vinaya* according to contemporary circumstances in relation to a matter not discussed at the time of the Buddha, because different *Vinaya* schools seem not to have existed at his time.<sup>78</sup>

### 2.3 Further rules and regulations to be considered

From a *Vinaya* legal point of view, however, the issue is even more complicated. Although not explained in the ordination rite itself, according to the *Karmavastu*, the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* section “Formal Act Matters,” in order to execute a valid *saṃghakarman* several rules and regulations have to be considered.<sup>79</sup>

For example, the preparation of *saṃghakarmans* always begins with sprinkling the place with water, sweeping the place, arranging the seats, and so forth. The monastic community is summoned by the sound of striking a *gaṇḍī* wood, the questions to be answered are submitted, and so forth. Most important is: the act should be complete (Tib. *tshang ba*) and flawless (Tib. *ma nor ba*), and the way of acting, the words, and the

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<sup>77</sup> Because similar to the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition for the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya* the main authority is with the *bhikṣus*, for full ordination of a woman, perhaps a Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣu saṃgha* should submit a formal request to a leading Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣu*, skilled in *Sūtra*, skilled in *Vinaya* and skilled in *Mātrkā*, to kindly send a group of Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇīs*, skilled in *Sūtra*, skilled in *Vinaya* and skilled in *Mātrkā* to assist for a Mūlasarvāstivāda women’s ordination. It may even turn out that a group of Dharmaguptaka monks in advisory capacity needs to join them.

<sup>78</sup> For detailed scriptural reasoning see Tsedroen & Anālayo (760-765).

<sup>79</sup> For a summary see, for example, Sera Jetsun Choekyi Gyaltzen (158a5-161a5).

sequence should be without disorder (Tib. *ma 'khrugs pa*). Whether a legal act comes about and thus is considered to be valid/effective (Tib. *las chags pa*) depends on many conditions.<sup>80</sup> The governing condition is that the *saṃgha* is in harmony/agreement, i.e., the *saṃgha* must have three special qualities (Tib. *dge 'dun khyad par gsum ldan*) or fulfill three principles (Tib. *chos gsum ldan tshang dgos pa*): (1) the quorum must be complete in number (minimum four, depending on the requirements for the respective legal act); (2) the members who complement the quorum must have the necessary virtues;<sup>81</sup> and (3) the quorum must be free of the two disharmonies, i.e., a) the disharmony of not attending the gathering, and b) the disharmony of leaving (without permission).<sup>82</sup> One of the many necessary virtues is that the *saṃgha* members need to stay within the same monastic boundary (Tib. *mtshams*, Skt. *sīmā*).<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, to be suitable to function as the preceptor or as the resident teacher (Tib. *gnas kyi bla ma*) the respective *bhikṣus* (or *bhikṣuṅīs*) need to have certain indi-

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<sup>80</sup> As Hüsken & Kieffer-Pülz show, during the Hamburg Congress 2007 it became evident that *saṃgha* acts such as women's ordination can either be perceived as a legal act or as a ritual of initiation. In my observation Theravāda seems to understand *saṃgha* act as legal act, whereas the focus of Tibetan Buddhism is more on ritual in terms of its potency or efficacy to generate the vow (*saṃvāra*), which up to the end of the life, the ceasing of the physical aggregate (Tib. *gzugs kyi phung po*, Skt. *rūpaskandha*), day and night produces merit (Tib. *bsod nams*, Skt. *puṇya*).

<sup>81</sup> This means that the monks or nuns performing the act have to be free from certain defects and have to meet certain criteria. Among these are the virtues of not adhering to bad views (Tib. *sdig lta can ma yin pa*), not being temporarily removed from one's rank (Tib. *sa gzhan na gnas pa ma yin pa*), not being one living apart (Tib. *tha dad du gnas pa ma yin pa*), to live/stay within the same boundary (Tib. *mtshams nang der yod pa yin pa*), and to be of the same sex (Tib. *mtshan mthun pa*).

<sup>82</sup> In this context it is mentioned that furthermore, for a *bhikṣu* with seven qualities (Tib. *dge slong chos bdun ldan*) it is necessary to have no discordant/conflicting behaviour (Tib. *der ma zad spyod lam mi mthun pa ma yin pa gcig kyang dgos so*).

<sup>83</sup> For the rules of *sīmā* according to the Mūlasarvāstivādins see Kieffer-Pülz (*Sīmā* 363-433) and on the term *sīmā* pp. 371-380.

vidual qualifications.<sup>84</sup> The preceptors similar to the resident teacher need to be:

1. Venerable (Tib. *btsun pa*), i.e., have pure ethics, have not been stained by a major offense,
2. Steadfast (Tib. *brtan pa*), i.e., have ten (or as a nun twelve) years uninterrupted standing after full ordination,
3. Learned (Tib. *mkhas pa*) in the *Vinaya*, the *Tripitaka* and the twenty-one groups with five characteristics each (Tib. *lnga phrugs nyer gcig po gang rung dang ldan pa*),
4. Helpful (Tib. *phan 'dog pa*) in twelve ways such as being compassionate, patient and so forth.<sup>85</sup> Among these it is said that the teacher and the person ordained must share the same view on discipline. According to Śākyaprabha that means:

. . . both must regard a particular transgression to the rules (such as drinking alcohol) to be a transgression, i.e., both must view that which interferes with the monastic training as detrimental to spiritual growth. Conversely, if, for example, the aspirant believes that killing a fetus is not a basis for incurring a downfall, his view is discordant (*lta ba*

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<sup>84</sup> Sera Jetsun Choekyi Gyaltzen (31a6ff). Cf. Mtso na ba (*ka*, 66a7ff).

<sup>85</sup> Mtso na ba (*ka*, 66b4): *phan 'dogs kyi yan lag ni chos bcu gnyis te / snying rje bzod ldan nang 'khor dag pa dang / phan 'dogs gnyis brtson mtshan mthun lta ba dag / smra shes don go shes pa rang bzhin gnas / lus ni tha ma las ni rang bzhin gnas / zhes gzung ngo* (helpfulness is said to be of twelve kinds: being compassionate and patient, maintaining close ties with pure companions, making effort in the two helpful activities, sharing the same sex and same views, being eloquent/articulate, understanding and sound of mind, having a natural human body and holding the established rank within the *saṃgha*).

*tha dad*) with that of the ceremonial master (CTHSN, f. 155b3) (as cited in Jamgön Kongtrul Tayé).

Most *geshes* seem to agree that a monastic rite is flawless and perfect (Tib. *cho ga nyes med phun sum tshog pa*) when (1) the words are in accordance with the rite and (2) the two disharmonies are absent, which in turn means (a) the number [of *saṃgha* members] is complete,<sup>86</sup> and (b) the additional [*saṃgha* members] are suitable.

If one prefers to follow the second approach of an ecumenical ordination, then one has to determine what exactly is meant by the absence of the two disharmonies or what is meant by being in harmony and sharing the same views.

We already discussed the need of sharing the same view (Tib. *lta ba mthun pa*, Skt. *samānadṛṣṭi*)<sup>87</sup> with regard to the interpretation of the *Vinaya* rules and the necessity to live/stay within the same monastic boundary, either as a resident or as a visiting monk/nun in order to perform monastic rites together. In this context, it becomes important to know whether and which *saṃgha* acts resident and visiting monks or nuns can perform together.

According to Kieffer-Pülz (*Sīmā* 365-66), visiting monks are not allowed to participate in the legal act of determination and announcement of the great boundary (Tib. *mtshams chen po*, Skt. *mahatī sīmā*) and the

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<sup>86</sup> For a detailed discussion on the term completeness [of the assembly], in German „Vollzähligkeit“ see Kieffer-Pülz (*Sīmā* 65-66) and Hu-von-Hinüber (219-223).

<sup>87</sup> Cf. p. 34. On *samānadṛṣṭi* (gleicher Ansicht sein) see Hu-von-Hinüber (489) referring to Panglung (178) and Chang (99) implying that sharing the same view refers to sharing fundamental Buddhist views such as the existence of future lives and the possibility to attain arhatship.

small boundary (Tib. *tshams bu chung*, Skt. *khuddalikā sīmā*).<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, together with the rest of the *saṃgha* visiting monks have to be present when the boundary marks (Tib. *mtshan ma*, Skt. *nimitta*)<sup>89</sup> are announced (*Sīmā* 387). Furthermore, there is a regulation that monks staying in the same boundary—whether residents [for a short time] (Tib. *gnas pa*, Skt. *āvāsika*)<sup>90</sup> or permanent residents (Skt. *naivāsika*, Tib. *gnyug mar gnas pa*)—should wait for each other instead of conducting the bi-monthly confession ceremony (Tib. *gso sbyong*; Skt. *poṣadha*) separately, i.e., they should conduct the legal act of confession ceremony together (Hu-von Hinüber 13, 467, 473, 477).

From the context, it seems clear that sharing the same view does not necessarily refer to sharing the same interpretation of *Vinaya* rules, but first of all refers to the absence of quarrel, squabble, conflict of opin-

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<sup>88</sup> For a brief explanation on monastic boundaries see Kieffer-Pülz (*Dignity* 221-222), and for one on the differences between a great and a small boundary in accordance with the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* see Kieffer-Pülz (*Sīmā* 371-375). The small boundary is located within the great boundary. It allows a small *saṃgha* to perform legal acts which do not require the participation of the whole *saṃgha* while the rest of the community present in the great boundary may carry on with their daily routines.

<sup>89</sup> Kieffer-Pülz (*Sīmā* 380).

<sup>90</sup> For a definition see Kieffer-Pülz (*Sīmā* 365-366). Härtel (96) understands Skt. *āvāsika*, Tib. *gnas pa*, as “zufällig anwesend,” i.e., occasionally present, s.o. who happens to be present, which implies a nearness to the Tibetan Term *glo bur du ‘ongs pa*, Skt. *āgantuka*. Jäschke understands *glo bur du ‘ongs pa* as “new comer,” but it also has the connotation of someone who arrives spontaneously, a visitor. Therefore, I understand “*gnas pa zhes bya ba ni dus thung ngur gnas pa*” as: “dweller/someone being in means: someone who stays for a short time.” Staying for a short time can refer to s.o. who stays temporarily or to someone who stays only recently in the sense of “new comer.” Such a person may become a permanent resident or leave after some time. Jonathan Silk (150-151) discusses different uses and dimensions of meaning of the term *āvāsika*. See also Bapat & Gokhale xliii: “temporary visiting Bhikṣus (*āvāsikā*).”

ion, causing discord and dispute.<sup>91</sup> Pivotal is that no *saṃgha* member raises an objection in the case of differing views.

As mentioned above, at the time of the Buddha no different *Vinaya* schools existed; resident and visiting monks belonged to the same *Vinaya* school. Consequently, the *Vinaya* itself does not make any explicit statement how today the different *Vinaya* schools could or should relate to each other. This is a question of today's exegesis, i.e., a touchstone for contemporary Buddhism.

*Can visiting monks or nuns participate in saṃgha acts of different Vinaya schools?*

Against this background the question is raised whether today visiting monks who neither belong to the same Tibetan Buddhist ordination lineage nor to the same community (on a permanent basis) can or even must join *saṃgha* acts such as the bimonthly confession ceremony of the hosting *Vinaya* school. For example, there are many monks from the Vietnamese, Korean or Taiwanese Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya* tradition who study in one of the three main Gelugpa monastic universities Sera, Drepung and Ganden Monastery in South India. Do they join the bimonthly *poṣadha* ceremony and the annual rainy season retreat (Tib. *dbyar gnas*; Skt. *varṣa*), or do they have to convert first, i.e., return their precepts and become reordained in the Tibetan tradition? What happens on these days, what happens during the rite to end the rainy season retreat (Tib. *dgag dbye*; Skt. *pravāraṇā*)? Do visiting monks participate or not?

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<sup>91</sup> For details see D 1 ('*dul ba*), ka, 220a5-b1 and for the Sanskrit parallel with its German translation Hu-von Hinüber (488-489).

In October 2012, when I attended the meeting of the Gelongma committee at Sarah Institute in Dharamsala, I did not raise this particular question but a simpler one, i.e., whether monks of different Tibetan Buddhist ordination lineages can perform the *poṣadha* ceremony together. This question was inspired by observations made over the last decades when—during huge Tibetan Buddhist events like the Great prayer festival (Tib. *smoṅ lam chen mo*)—monks, regardless of their different Gelugpa monastic communities,<sup>92</sup> gather and perform the *poṣadha* ceremony together. Many Tibetan monks even do not know their exact lineage, they just know who ordained them and that it is Mūlasarvāstivāda.

Therefore, I raised this question with the *Vinaya* experts of the Gelongma committee, comprising monks of the four different major schools of Tibetan Buddhism living together during their three-month research stay. I was told they could perform a joint *poṣadha* ceremony, even holding different Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* lineages (for an article on the different Tibetan *Vinaya* lineages see Martin).

Geshe Rinchen Ngodup, one of the committee members, explained that according to the *Vinaya*, after having gathered in one place, it is not even allowed to perform the *poṣadha* ceremony separately. After permission has been given, it can be performed together. Even if the monks do not agree in their views, according to the MSV the *karman* (legal act) is considered valid (Tib. *las chags pa*), provided no member of the community raises any objection.<sup>93</sup> Karmans become invalid only if the boundary has not been properly established first.

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<sup>92</sup> On the decentralized structure of monastic communities and their autonomy see (Huvon Hinüber 19-20).

<sup>93</sup> Cf. report given by the Gelongma Research Committee (330) that met in 2012 at Sarah College: “*las kyi cho ga byed pa'i tshes don la lta ba mi mthun kyang rang gi lta ba mi brjod pa dang dad pa 'bul na mthun pa yin min sogs gyi dpyad gzhi*”—analysis, whether there is una-

*Can Dharmaguptaka nuns practicing Tibetan Buddhism convert to the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya school?*

Another question at stake is whether those Tibetan, Himalayan and/or Western nuns who live according to the Tibetan tradition but were fully ordained in the Dharmaguptaka tradition<sup>94</sup> could “convert” to become Mūlasarvāstivāda nuns, and if so, how to do this.

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nimity/concord/harmony (Tib. *methun pa*, Skt. *samagra*) or not, when at the time of ceremonial rites—even if the *saṃgha* members do not share the same view—those having a different view do not express it and give confidence. To give confidence to each other (Tib. *gcig gis gcig la dad pa byin pa*) means to give permission (Tib. *gnang ba*, Skt. *samunajñā*, Mvy 6620). Similar to Tib. *gnang ba sbyin pa* (see Kieffer-Pülz *Simā* 410, 369). For the term *samagrasaṃgha* (Tib. *dge 'dun methun pa*) or *saṃghasāmagrī*, Pā. *saṃghasāmaggī*, i.e., unanimity/harmony of the *saṃgha* cf. Härtel (111-112, “Einmütigkeit der Gemeinde”).

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Bhikṣu Thich Quang Ba, founding abbot of Van Hanh Monastery, Canberra (Australia), ordained 1974, stated during the Hamburg Congress 2007 in front of H.H. the Dalai Lama: “If you require the participation of senior *bhikṣuṇīs* from other *nikāya* traditions or *bhikṣuṇīs* ordained in other traditions but following the Tibetan tradition, I believe there are many who are more than happy to assist.” (Dalai Lama XIV 258). Hüsken & Kieffer-Pülz (260-261) raise the question of re-ordination for those nuns who fully ordained in the Dharmaguptaka tradition but follow the Tibetan tradition. The question of re-ordination of nuns in the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition in general, not in that particular case, has been a controversial issue during the Vinaya conference in Dharamsala in 1998. One Tibetan scholar pointed out that one of the impediments to women’s ordination is to have been previously ordained, whereas men could be re-ordained up to three times. Thus I should add here that Guṇaprabha’s *Vinayasūtra* classifies the question of having been previously gone forth as one of six impediments that specially concern nuns’ candidates, cf. D 4117 (*'dul ba*), *wu*, 11b4; Jyväsjärvi 519. Bapat & Gokhale xl render this: “When she has already become an ascetic (in some other school).” Whether such an impediment exists has to be verified by asking the candidate: “Have you been gone forth previously?” (Tib. *sngon rab tu byung ba yin nam*), a question that not only occurs in the list for women, but also in the list for men as can

In this context a senior Theravāda monk stated that in his view it would be sufficient for Tibetan Buddhist Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇīs* who strive to become Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇīs* to declare in front of a Tibetan Buddhist *bhikṣu saṃgha* that from now on they will follow the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* code of rules and henceforth belong to the same *Vinaya* school. For this, he was referring to Anālayo (*Legality* 323) who explains,

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be found in the *Pravrajyāvastu* (*Rab tu byung gi bzhi*), cf. J. Chung Handbuch (91, § II.iii.1.3.3); Härtel (80, no. 35). For nuns the \**Bhikṣuṇyupasaṃpadājñāpti* in the *Kṣudraka-vastu* reads: “You are not one that has gone forth previously?” (Tib. *ci khyod sngon rab tu byung ba ma yin nam*, Skt. *kaccit tvaṃ pūrvaṃ pravrajitā*), cf. D 6 (*‘dul ba*), *da*, 109a7; Sch 253; *Kṣudr-v(Bhī)* 16 b2. This question is missing from the first list of impediments for admission of men in the *Las brgya rtsa gicg pa* (*Ekottarakarmaśataka*), D 4118 (*‘dul ba*), *wu*, 101a5-b5 (cf. J. Chung Handbuch 82, note 6), but does occur further down in the list of impediments for full ordination of monks. The full passage reads as follows (D 1, *ka*, 54b4-6): [The instructor] “should ask: ‘You are not one that has gone forth previously? If he says ‘I have already gone forth,’ one should [further] ask him: ‘You are not one that has committed any of the four offenses (Tib. *ltung ba*, Skt. *āpatti*) from among the *pārājikas*? Or, in case you descended, have you properly returned the training?’ If he answers: ‘I have committed an offense,’ one has to tell him: ‘Well then, depart!’ If he says: ‘I have not committed [such an offense],’ one should ask him: ‘Are you one who is now going forth?’ If he answers: ‘I am going forth,’ one should ask him: ‘Will you keep pure conduct/ceibacy (*brahmacarya*) well?’” (*khyod sngon rab tu byung ba ma yin nam zhes dri bar bya’o/ /gal te byung ngo zhes zer na khyod la pham par ‘gyur ba bzhi las ltung ba gang yang rung ba zhiḡ byung ba ma yin nam/ khyod ‘bab pa na bslab pa legs par phul lam zhes dri bar bya’o/ /gal te ltung ba byung ngo zhes zer na/ / ‘o na song shig ces brjod par bya’o/ /gal te ma byung ngo zhes zer na/ ji ltar khyod da ltar rab tu byung ba yin nam zhes dri bar bya’o/ /gal te bdag rab tu byung ba yin zhes zer na/ khyod kyis tshangs par spyod pa legs par spyad dam zhes dri bar bya’o*). The difference is that women are only asked whether they have been previously gone forth or not, and if so, they have to depart. In general, having gone forth previously is one of the requirements to become fully ordained. Thus here the question refers to a different case. As we will see below there seem to be cases in which re-ordination of *bhikṣuṇīs* is allowed, when no offense or return of training is involved, in order to gain certainty or to clear doubt (52, note 96).

In the Vinaya, the notion of being of a “different community,” *nānasaṃvāsa*, refers to a case of disagreement about the rules. . . . The status of being *nānasaṃvāsa* thus comes into existence because of a dispute about the interpretation of the rules. Therefore, it can be resolved by settling the dispute. Once there is agreement in relation to the interpretation of the Vinaya rules, those who were *nānasaṃvāsa* become again *samānasaṃvāsa*, part of the same community.

This raises the question of whether Tibetan *bhikṣus* consider those *bhikṣuṇīs* who are practicing in the Tibetan tradition and have taken their full ordination in the Dharmaguptaka tradition to be *nānāsaṃvāsika/~kā*<sup>95</sup> (cf. Anālayo *Legality* 323-325), and if so, whether they could become again *samānasaṃvāsika/~kā* by such a declaration or by a *karman* of settling a dispute (Tib. *zhi bar byed pa*) on interpretation of Vinaya rules.

In the Tibetan translation of the Poṣadhavastu (Tib. *gso sbyong gi gzhi*) two ways of regaining the *samānasaṃvāsaka* status are explained:

Bhikṣus, there are the two ways of regaining the *samānasaṃvāsaka* status. What are the two? Either one declares oneself on one's own to be of the same community, or one is reinstated by the community [after one had been suspended by the community for not seeing an offence].<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> As mentioned above (cf. p. 30 and p. 38) there are Theravāda monks who consider themselves *samānasaṃvāsika* in regard to their own legal community, whereas they consider monks of other legal communities as *nānāsaṃvāsika*.

<sup>96</sup> D 1 (*dul ba*), *ga*, 127a3.

Tibetan:

*dge slong dag gnyis po 'di dag ni mthun par gnas pa yin te/  
gnyis gang zhe na/ gang zhig bdag nyid kyis bdag nyid mthun  
pa'i gnas su bzhag pa dang / gang zhig dge 'dun gyis chos kyis  
bzhag pa'o.*

Although currently there is no dispute on interpretation of *Vinaya* rules, the question is whether one of the two *saṃgha* acts could be applied to the situation we are confronted with. The second does not apply because there is no record of the Dharmaguptakas being suspended by the Mūlasarvāstivādins. From a historical point of view, the Dharmaguptaka school came into existence before the Mūlasarvāstivāda school. Thus, the Dharmaguptaka school cannot be a split off from the Mūlasarvāstivāda school due to a dispute between two early communities.

The question is whether Dharmaguptaka nuns despite practicing in the Tibetan tradition could declare themselves on their own to be of the same *Vinaya* school as the Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda monks. In this context, during a personal communication the leading Tibetan *Vinaya* expert Geshe Rinchen Ngodup indicated that should nuns like me, who have taken ordination in the Dharmaguptaka tradition by *bhikṣus* alone, express doubts regarding whether, for example, they had been ordained properly, in his view, based on a passage in the *Bhikṣuṇī Vinayavibhaṅga* they could be re-ordained by *bhikṣus* alone in the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> That re-ordination of nuns is allowed if doubts are involved is based on the Tibetan *Bhikṣuṇī Vinayavibhaṅga* as pointed out by the Gelongma Research Committee (Lhasa Kangyur ('dul ba), ta, p. 354a7-354b3): "snga bsnyen rdzogs kyi cho ga byas zin kyang slar yang bsnyen par rdzogs pa'i cho ga byed chog pa" (permission to perform the *upasampadā* rite again although the *upasampadā* rite has already been performed before" (205). This

For this we have not only canonical evidence but also a precedent. As already mentioned above, around the years 432-434 a reordination of *bhikṣuṇīs* took place in China: Nuns were ordained by monks alone. When nuns from Sri Lanka arrived and stayed with them for about six years doubts arose among the Chinese nuns, whether their ordination involved an offence, and they they asked Gunavarman whether reordination is possible. He confirmed that, indeed, receiving the ordination a second time is of benefit. There is no mention that they would have to return their vows before taking it a second time. On the contrary, the biography of the nun Pao-hsien (no. 34; 401-477) clearly states that “[Gunavarman] had not said that the first transmission to China, from the Assembly of Monks only, was invalid. He had said, rather, that the second transmission [that included the Assembly of Nuns] was augmenting the good value of the obligation that had already been received” (Tsai 63).

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fact was unknown at the time of the Hamburg Congress 2007. D 5 (*‘dul ba*), *ta*, 256a1-2 reads: “In case there is no absolute certainty as to right or wrong, a period of demotion (Tib. (*sa*) *spo ba*, Skt. *parivāsa*) should be imposed, or [the *bhikṣuṇī*] should be fully ordained again” (*gal te ma tshang na sa spo bar bya ba’am, slar yang bsnyen par rdzogs par bya’o*). Perhaps this is a supplement peculiar to the Mūlasarvāstivāda BhīVinVibh commentary on *pāyattika* (Tib. *ltung byed*) 77: “If a *bhikṣuṇī* knowingly fully ordains an unmarried woman who has not reached the age of twenty, she commits a *pāyattika*” (*yang dge slong ma gang shes bzhin du bud med khyim so ma bzung ba lo nyi shu ma lon pa bsnyen par rdzogs par byed na ltung byed do*). For comparison see Waldschmidt 140; Roth 238-240; Hirakawa 296-299; Hüskén *Vorschriften* 265-266. Tsomo 110 needs correction. Panglung 166 states that the 180 *pātayantikas* are outlined in 28 groups. But although 180 is the correct number of the *pāyattikas* in the Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda *Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣasūtra*, according to the index given in *Dpe bsdur ma* (*‘dul ba*), vol. 9 the BhīVinVibh seems to consist of 165 *pāyattikas* only. This needs thorough investigation (see above note 75). For the *Dpe bsdur ma* version of the commentary see vol. 9, pp. 601-606 (*ltung byed drug pa’i gnyis pa ‘chad pa*, no. \*57).

Thus, instead of performing an ecumenical ordination a third option may be possible by following the example of the Bodhgayā ordinations 1998, where after the Dharmaguptaka ordination in front of both kinds of *saṃgha*, Theravāda *bhikkhus* “have had the function of what in the modern tradition is known under the technical term of *daḥhikamma*, literally ‘making strong.’ This refers to a formal act through which a *bhikkhu* or a group of *bhikkhus* ordained elsewhere gain the recognition of a particular community of which he or they wish to be part” (Anālayo *Legality* 324).

A first step in this direction was taken by H.H. the Dalai Lama when he stated in Hamburg in 2009 “There are already nuns within the Tibetan tradition who have received the full *bhikṣuṇī* vow according to the Dharmaguptaka lineage and who we recognize as fully ordained” (Dalai Lama XIV 279). However, although they are recognized as *bhikṣuṇīs*, they are still Dharmaguptaka nuns who have to follow a different *Vinaya* than the monks. Suppose there were at least twelve Tibetan or Himalayan *bhikṣuṇīs* who have been ordained in the Dharmaguptaka tradition. Would it be possible for them to declare in front of a Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣu saṃgha* that from now on they wish to be part of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* school? Or, alternatively, could they be ordained a second time by Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣus* alone, this ceremony being considered their conversion to the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* school? The answer to these questions can only be reconstructed by reflecting on the various aspects involved. We will not find a ready-made solution for this 21<sup>st</sup> century question in the ancient texts. It requires an interpretation according to today’s context and competent *bhikṣus*, well learned in the *Vinaya* and willing to assume responsibility, who have the approval and support of their respective monastic communities.

### 3. The Historic Decision Taken by the “12<sup>th</sup> Religious Conference of the Four Major Schools of Tibetan Buddhism and the Bon Tradition”

After about 30 years of research and discussion on the matter, on June 20, 2015, the “12<sup>th</sup> Religious Conference of the Four Major Schools of Tibetan Buddhism and the Bon Tradition,”<sup>98</sup> organized by the Department of Religion and Culture, announced the following decision on “Agenda item 2” during its closing ceremony, which was attended by H. H. the Dalai Lama and the head Lamas of all the major schools of Tibetan Buddhism. From the minutes:<sup>99</sup>

*gros gzhi gnyis pa/ chos tshogs thengs bcu gcig pa'i gros chod  
dngongs don 2012 lor btsugs pa'i dge slong ma'i nyams zhib tshogs  
chung nas bton pa'i “bod du dar ba'i gzhi thams cad yod par  
smra ba'i lugs la dge slong ma slar gso yod med dpyad gzhi lung  
gi bang mdzod”<sup>100</sup> ces pa'i snyan thor gnang phyogs ji dge bka'  
bsdur gnang rgyu/*

Agenda item 2

As decided in accord with the intention of the “11<sup>th</sup> Religious Conference,”<sup>101</sup> in 2012, a *Vinaya* Research Commit-

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<sup>98</sup> From here on just referred to as “12<sup>th</sup> Religious Conference.”

<sup>99</sup> The following youtube link of a Tibetan TV report (sequence 19-22 mins.) in Tibetan language was viewed on:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZODCi1G6k7U> (accessed 6 September 2015). The respective text from the Tibetan minutes read out at this conference was received from the Tibetan Nuns Project on August 7, 2015.

<sup>100</sup> Title of the report by the Gelongma Research Committee.

<sup>101</sup> The wording of that decision (on agenda item 7) is as follows: “For the past many years research has been done on the *bhikṣuṇī* lineage. The outcome has been published in a series of books. As it is clear from this [research’s outcome] the *Mulasarvāstivāda Bhikṣuṇī* lineage does not exist. Also with regard to the *bhikṣuṇī* lineages of other schools

tee had gathered and published [their findings] under the title Treasury on the matter to be analyzed, i.e., whether the *bhikṣuṇī* [vow/ ordination lineage?] can be revived in the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition spread in Tibet. The [outcome of the] discussion on this virtuous issue is recorded as follows:

*gros chod gnyis pa/*

*kaḷ da bar chos tshogs rnam su bka' bsdur dang de bzhin 'brel  
yod khag nas nyams bzhib gnang ba sogs byung yod kyang/ bod  
du dar ba'i gzhi thams cad yod par smra ba'i dam chos 'dul ba'i  
lugs la dge slong ma sgrub thabs yod med kha tshon chod pa'i  
thag gcod cig gnang thabs dka' bar brten/ dge slong ma sgrub  
thabs kyi gnad don 'di nyid mu mthud nar 'gyangs su ma gtong  
bar bsnyen par rdzogs par 'dod pa'i btsun ma so so'i thugs 'dod  
bzhin chos srung sde pa'i lugs kyi dge slong ma'i sdom pa blangs  
na 'grigs pa'i mang mos byung/*

Decision [on agenda item] 2:

2.1 Although [the issue has been] discussed in the ["Religious] Conferences" up to now and research has been done accordingly, it is difficult to reach a clear decision on whether there is a way to ordain *bhikṣuṇīs* in the noble Dharma *Vinaya* tradition of the Mūlasarvāstivāda, which spread to Tibet. Thus, in order to avoid any further delay with regard to the matter of ordination of *bhikṣuṇīs*, the

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doubts with regard to a pure source have not been utterly overcome or demolished. Based on this, in order to settle the matter, the Department of Religion and Culture will form a subcommittee of experts with *Vinaya* holders, representing all the traditions, in order to reach a final conclusion as to whether there is or is not a method to revive the *bhikṣuṇī* lineage and to make a clear statement."

majority approved that it is alright if nuns, in accordance with their individual wish become fully ordained, take the *bhikṣuṇī* vow in the Dharmaguptaka tradition.

*khaḥ de ltar byung tshe sde pa de'i lugs kyi las chog sogs 'dul ba'i gzhung rnams bod skad du phab bsgyur dang/ gso sbyong tshugs stangs sogs gzhi gsum gyi las rnams kyang lugs de dang mthun par tshad ldan yong ba dang/ dge bsnyen ma nas dge slong ma'i bar gyi bslab tshigs rnams kyang de'i lugs ltar bslang rgyu yod pa gnang rgyu/*

2.2 At the time when this happens, the *karmavācanās* (rite manuals) and other texts of this [Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*] school as well as the respective *Vinaya* commentaries are to be translated into Tibetan language. Also the *saṃgha* acts related to the three [most relevant] *skandhaka*s [of the *Vinayavastu*] and signify monastic life such as how to perform the *poṣadha* (confession) should be made available in a proper, fully-characterized way in accordance with that tradition then. Also the precepts from an *upāsikā* up to a *bhikṣuṇī* should be given in the way they are received in that [Dharmaguptaka] tradition.

*gaḥ g.yung drung bon gyi lugs la drang srong ma'am dge slong ma'i sdom rgyun yod pa snyan seng byung bas blo nges byung/*

2.3 Because a report was submitted stating that in the Svastika Bon tradition the vow lineage of a *bhikṣuṇī* (Tib.

*Gelongma*) or *Drangsongma*<sup>102</sup> does exist, this fact has been noted.<sup>103</sup>

### 3.1 Reflection on the decision taken at the conference

At first glance, the decision merely seems to confirm the status quo, because in 2007, during the Hamburg Congress, H.H. the Dalai Lama had already stated:

One thing we can do now is to translate the three primary monastic activities (*poṣadha*, *varṣa*, and *pravāraṇā*) from the Dharmagupta lineage into Tibetan and encourage the Tibetan *bhikṣuṇīs* to do these practices as a *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha*. (Dalai Lama XIV 279)

The significance of the decision by the “12<sup>th</sup> Religious Conference,” however, should not be underestimated. The major breakthrough in this decision is the acknowledgement of the validity of the East Asian Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇī* ordination lineage. By acknowledging that Tibetan nuns could ordain in the Dharmaguptaka tradition, the participants have conceded that it is a reliable lineage. This development is new and differs from the position held during their last “11<sup>th</sup> Religious Conference” in 2011, when they stated “with regard to the *bhikṣuṇī* line-

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<sup>102</sup> Tib. *drang srong ma*—female form of Tib. *drang srong ba*, Skt. *ṛṣabha*.

<sup>103</sup> Among Tibetans, it is still controversial whether Bon has to be considered distinct from Tibetan Buddhism. Although it traces its history back to pre-Buddhist practices, it shares a common set of beliefs, practices and canonical literature with Tibetan Buddhism. In 1988 the Dalai Lama “declared that Bon should be regarded as one of the five major religious traditions of Tibet, along with the four Buddhist orders” (Powers & Templeman 101).

ages of other schools, doubts with regard to a pure source have not been utterly overcome or demolished.”

Also, considering that the Tibetan canon was closed at the time of Bu-ston in the 14th century and that during the time of King Tri Ralpachen (r. 815-838) a decree had been issued not to spread other *Vinayas* aside from the Mūlasarvāstivādins in Tibet (Tsering 168; Powers & Templeman 223-224), a major step has been taken in deciding that the *Vinaya* of the Dharmaguptakas will be added to the Tibetan canonical texts, i.e., the Kangyur and Tengyur. This falls in line with a more comprehensive plan: In January 2011, during the “Tengyur Translation Conference” at the Central University of Tibetan Studies (CUTS) in Sarnath/Varanasi, H.H. the Dalai Lama proposed to “collect all the texts from the Asian canons (Chinese, Korean, Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan) and make sure that the texts missing in one are included in the another.”<sup>104</sup> The Dalai Lama repeatedly expressed the wish to have the early discourses of the Buddha, the Pāli sūtras translated into Tibetan.

Should the Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇī* practice be further introduced in Tibetan Buddhism, this would be a major step toward recognizing other Buddhist traditions on an equal footing.

### 3.2 Shortcomings of the decision

Nonetheless, no logical conclusions have been drawn regarding the restoration of the nuns' ordination lineage in the Mūlasarvāstivāda school despite many years of efforts and research initiated by H. H. the Dalai Lama to finding possibilities of restoring.

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<sup>104</sup> <http://wordpress.tsadra.org/?p=1071>. For the complete conference material see: <http://www.aibs.columbia.edu/conference.html> (accessed 31 August 2015)

During the International Congress on Buddhist Women's Role in the Saṅgha in 2007 at the University of Hamburg, H.H. the Dalai Lama stated (268):

First of all, I just want to make clear that we all accept and recognize as *bhikṣuṇīs* those Tibetans and Westerners who have received Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇī* ordination. This is not the issue. The issue is to find the way to ordain *bhikṣuṇīs* that is in accordance with the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* texts.

This hope was reconfirmed in a letter by H.H. the Dalai Lama directed to the Committee for Bhikṣuṇī Ordination in the Tibetan Buddhist Tradition,<sup>105</sup> dated January 20, 2013, which states:

As one individual, I do not have the authority to institute the *bhikṣuṇī* ordination in the Tibetan community. This is an issue for the saṅgha collectively to decide. However, I have long encouraged the convening of an international meeting of the saṅgha to discuss the issue. In preparation for that, it would be good if Tibetan *bhikṣus* were to agree upon a way in which that the Mulasarvastivada *bhikṣuṇī* ordination could be given.

Furthermore, in 2007 H.H. the Dalai Lama stated (268-269):

I can institute that the Tibetan *bhikṣuṇīs* ordained in the Dharmaguptaka tradition meet in groups to perform the three saṅgha rituals. . . . I can have the appropriate texts for the Dharmaguptaka versions of these three saṅgha rituals translated from Chinese into Tibetan immediately

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<sup>105</sup> <http://www.bhiksuniordination.org/> (accessed 16 August 2015)

and encourage the Tibetan *bhikṣuṇīs* to begin doing these practices as a community. With the support of the other *bhikṣus* here, I can say that much; no one will oppose that.

Thus, the official decision taken by the “12<sup>th</sup> Religious Conference” that despite all the successful research submitted, “it is difficult” to reach a clear decision, is unfortunate. Moreover, the choice of “*de dka' las khag po 'dug*” is telling because in its Tibetan colloquial version this wording carries the meaning of something that is not only difficult but not possible, something you cannot or do not want to do. The conference was supposed to decide how to revive the Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇī* order and by which approach. It did not do so. Why is this important?

Most of those novice nuns who are interested in full ordination want their own teachers to be involved in their ordination and do not want to receive an ordination in a culture and a language setting not familiar to them. After thirty-five years of research, the heads of the traditions were unable to decide how the nuns should proceed. Therefore, it is unreasonable to expect the nuns who lack so much education to decide on their own how to go ahead.

Furthermore, it is also not clear how the Tibetan Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇīs* will then undertake *karmans* that require the cooperation of *bhikṣus*. Will this be done with Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣus*? If so, which *Vinaya* will be used? If so, will all *bhikṣus* agree to do it, or may they opt out saying that because this is a different *Vinaya* tradition, the *bhikṣuṇīs* should get *bhikṣus* from East Asian countries to help them?

The decision taken in June 2015 by the “12<sup>th</sup> Religious Conference” that Tibetan Buddhist novice nuns can decide on their own to take ordination in the East Asian Dharmaguptaka tradition carries great weight. The majority of the Buddhist leaders present agreed to introduce the *bhikṣuṇī* lineage from the Dharmaguptaka tradition into Tibetan

Buddhism. However, it remains unclear how Tibetan *bhikṣus* of the Mūla-sarvāstivāda tradition will relate to the Tibetan Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇīs* on a day to day practical level.

#### 4. Prospects

Now much hope lies with the 17th Karmapa as well as with other Buddhist leaders and with Tibetan Buddhist novice nuns who are bold enough to act on this decision.

On January 24, 2015, during the Second Ārya Kṣemā Winter Dharma Gathering at Tergar Monastery in Bodhgayā, H. H. the Karmapa Orgyen Thrinle Dorje made the announcement that<sup>106</sup> he would take concrete steps toward restoring nuns' vows in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. It seems that he is planning to opt for the ecumenical approach to ordination, beginning with the conferral of the novice “getsulma” (*śrāmaṇerikā*) and training “*śikṣamāṇā*” nun's vows, conferred with the assistance of a special contingent of nuns from the Dharmaguptaka tradition. This will lay the necessary framework leading to “gelongma” or “*bhikṣuṇī*” full nun's vows.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> On January 24, 2015 he said “beginning next year” (2016). But on January 15, 2016, during the Third Ārya Kṣemā Winter Dharma Gathering in Bodhgayā when discussing the issue of ordination of nuns, he indicated that although he had hoped to initiate the process of giving *bhikṣuṇī* ordination this year (2016), it had to be postponed for a variety of reasons. <http://kagyuoffice.org/the-gyalwang-karmapa-teaches-on-bodhichitta-and-discusses-bhikshuni-ordination-plans/> (accessed 30 July 2016)

<sup>107</sup> For further details see the report on H.H. the Karmapa's official website: <http://kagyuoffice.org/gyalwang-karmapa-makes-historic-announcement-on-restoring-nuns-ordination/> (accessed 16 August 2015)

Among Tibetan *Vinaya* scholars, as we know, it is controversial whether ordination by *bhikṣus* alone would be valid. So far no majority has been achieved on this first approach. Obviously in line with this view, Gyalwang Karmapa argues<sup>108</sup> that because there are no *bhikṣuṇī* vows in the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition one cannot speak of proper *śrāmaṇerikā* vows either; therefore, it is difficult to say that there is a truly ordained *saṃgha* of women who have gone forth.

This statement has caused some resentment around the globe but it could also be taken as an example of a typical Tibetan philosophical sharp debate. As mentioned above, there is clear canonical evidence that, if circumstances so require, *bhikṣus* can give all stages of women's ordination, starting with the going forth and reaching all the way up to the full ordination. On the other hand, according to the *bhikṣuṇī* ordination rite the going forth and the precepts of a lay-woman, of a novice, and of a probationer should be given by *bhikṣuṇīs*. In the Tibetan tradition, however, for about a millenium, the female lay and novice precepts are given by *bhikṣus*. This raises the question of legitimacy. When this practice is based on the same *Vinaya* commentaries which exceptionally allow *bhikṣus* to give *śikṣamāṇā* and *bhikṣuṇī* ordination, should they not be implemented consistently?

Therefore, the solution H.H. the Kamapa is striving for is ordaining *bhikṣuṇīs* by a twofold *saṃgha* (*ubhayasaṃgha*) of ten Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣus* and twelve Dharmagutpaka *bhikṣuṇīs* two years later.<sup>109</sup>

During a meeting with the Karmapa on August 28, 2015 in Bonn, Germany, he reconfirmed that the decision of the “12<sup>th</sup> Religious Conference” has not affected his plans. He will continue to take concrete steps

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Personal communication with Gyalwang Karmapa on October 10, 2011 as well as with Geshe Rinchen Ngödup on August 14, 2015.

toward restoring nuns' vows in Tibetan Buddhism through the second approach. The Karmapa is planning to invite nuns from the Dharmaguptaka tradition to confer the *upāsikā*, *śrāmaṇerikā* and *śikṣamāṇā* vows.<sup>110</sup> Two years later, leading monks of the Karma Kagyü tradition may confer the Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇī* vows together with the Dharmaguptaka nuns, after the latter have given the *brahmacaryopasthāna*. The ordination may be carried out in Chinese language, and translation would be provided. For the detailed planning he announced that he would soon set up a committee. Furthermore, he would like to apply a *bhikṣuṇī* ordination manual included in the *Collected Works* by the 8th Karmapa Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507-1554) (*'Dul ba'i las chog mthong ba don 'grub*).<sup>111</sup>

The first approach, an ordination by *bhikṣus* alone, no longer seems to be an option for him because the majority of the decision-

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<sup>110</sup> On August 30, at the end of his teachings in Bonn, Gyalwang Karmapa stated that in January/February 2016 the annual Kagyü Mönlam (Kagyü Prayer festival) will take place with many monks coming, and thereafter the nuns Winter Dharma Gathering will take place, and he is making efforts for the full ordination of nuns to take place, probably in March. In December 2015 the timing of the 3rd Arya Kshema Winter Dharma Gathering has been changed from after the Kagyü Mönlam to before the Tibetan New Year celebrations to be held from January 14 to February 3, 2016.

<sup>111</sup> My thanks go to D. Diana Finnegan for this information. It is available as printed excerpt in Tibetan, (accessed 1 October 2016): [http://www.namsebangdzo.com/dul\\_wa\\_i\\_las\\_chog\\_mthong\\_bas\\_don\\_grub\\_p/9788189017583.htm](http://www.namsebangdzo.com/dul_wa_i_las_chog_mthong_bas_don_grub_p/9788189017583.htm). I am also grateful to Alexander Schiller (University of Vienna), who called my attention to a text with the very similar title *'Dul ba'i las chog mthong ba don ldan* by Phyogs las rnam par rgyal ba'i lha. A scan of the latter is available with the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, 1 volume; 67 folios, W00KG03994. [s.n.], [s.l.]. [n.d.]. It is a rare *dbu med* manuscript discovered in the PRC, scanned in 2001. According to the colophon the text traces back to the 3rd Karmapa Rang byung rdo rje (1284-1339), and it is missing from his new *Collected Works* 2006 (W30541).

makers would not accept it. At times when ordinations were given by monks alone, in the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, it led to harsh criticism (Tsering & Russel; Tsedroen *Generation* 207; Schneider 115). Because the Karmaṃpa does not want this history to be repeated, he chooses a different way to avoid social backlash.

Although Tibetan Buddhist *śrāmaṇerikās* may have preferred to receive all stages of ordination from their leading Tibetan male *Vinaya* masters, in the long run and on a global level the decision to include the centuries-long practical experience of Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇīs* in the learning process will prove to be valuable. For Tibetan nuns, however, who do not belong to the Karma Kagyü tradition—unless their teachers encourage them in a similar way—it may take a long time until they will take full ordination in the Dharmaguptaka tradition.

For women in the West practicing in the Tibetan tradition, things may be different. For them it may not make such a big difference whether they become ordained in the Dharmaguptaka or the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition. Thus, it is helpful to have a clear decision on nuns' ordination now. If they are interested in full ordination, they will know where they have to turn their attention and interest when it comes to *Vinaya* practice.

Due to the decision taken, the acceptance of Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇīs* will further grow in Tibetan Buddhism, especially when the concerned nuns' teachers will have access to the relevant texts in their own Tibetan language and can learn and study the similarities and the differences between both *Vinaya* traditions, the Mūlasarvāstivāda and the Dharmaguptaka.

It is a good sign that nowadays dialogues on *Vinaya* not only take place among nuns but now also among monks. The nuns officially began networking on this issue during the “First International [Sakya–dhita]

Conference on Buddhist Nuns” in 1987,<sup>112</sup> the monks during the “International Conference on *Vinaya*” organized by the CUTS, January 17-19, 2011. Another dialogue, carried out on the level of Sri Lankan and Tibetan Buddhist leaders, is being referred to as “an historic conclave” organized by the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) in New Delhi on March 18 and 19, 2015.<sup>113</sup> Considering that dialogue cannot take place between traditions but only between persons, the various initiatives will increasingly bear fruit on an individual level and will help to build trust in order to learn from each other, which in turn will fertilize the discourse also on an institutional level.

The Tibetan dialogue among the Buddhists of the four major traditions and the Bon tradition has also grown over the years. On December 29, 2011, during my stay at the CUTS in Sarnath, I had the opportunity to meet with a leading Bonpo scholar. It was through him that I found out that Bon monks keep 250 precepts, whereas nuns keep 360 precepts. The number of precepts is very similar to the numbers kept by Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda monks (253) and nuns (364). In the Bon tradition today, which is widely spread in Amdo and Kham but not in Central Tibet (namely Ü-tsang and Ngari), all stages of women’s ordination are given by Bonpo *bhikṣus* alone. Some contemporary Tibetan Buddhist monk scholars seem to assume that Bon was patterned after Buddhist *saṃgha* and thus is emulating it and not “authentic.”<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> <http://sakyadhita.org/conferences/1st-si-con.html> (accessed 16 August 2015). During that Conference the author of this article had been elected to become the head of the *Vinaya* Research Committee (cf. Tsedroen *Activities*).

<sup>113</sup> <http://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/dialogue-on-vinaya-conclave-in-india-unites-sri-lankan-and-tibetan-buddhists> (accessed 16 August 2015)

<sup>114</sup> Recently Ulrike Roesler (435) pointed out that “the Bonpos have their own version of the story about how the monastic ordination lineage survived in Tibet during the decline of monasticism in the ninth to tenth centuries.” She further remarks that the

For the future of Tibetan Buddhist monasticism a lot will depend on how the first Tibetan *bhikṣuṇīs* will practice. Setting up strong nuns' orders will set strong precedents. This is why the Karmapa wants to start it in an organized way and not leave it up to the nuns as individuals. He has also said that great emphasis will be put on the training of these *bhikṣuṇīs*.

Whether, in the end, the Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇī* practice will be revived in the Karma Kagyü tradition whereas the Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇī* practice will be further introduced into the other traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, the recent decision by the “12<sup>th</sup> Religious Conference” is a major step toward recognizing other Buddhist traditions on an equal footing, and is thus a true sign of a growing pluralist attitude toward other Buddhist traditions. Therefore, irrespective of its shortcomings, it has to be regarded as a great success and an important milestone.<sup>115</sup>

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*Vinaya* of the Bon tradition is “much more than just another version of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*,” (441) and that “we have to acknowledge that it is attested later than the Tibetan Buddhist *Vinaya*.” (445)

<sup>115</sup> This paper is based on my presentation on “Gender in Buddhism” (section 16) given during the Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies (IABS) at the University of Vienna (Austria), August 19, 2014. The findings presented here are the results of two research projects I am involved in: “The ordination of Buddhist nuns in the Tibetan Buddhist canon and its presentation in the Tibetan commentaries”, supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), and the “Religion and Dialogue in Modern Societies” project, funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Germany (BMBF). The help of both esteemed organizations is gratefully acknowledged.

**Abbreviations**

ACIP	Asian Classics Input Project
BhīKaVā	<i>Bhikṣuṇīkarmavācanā</i>
BhīVinVibh	<i>Bhikṣuṇī Vinayavibhaṅga</i>
CUTS	Central University of Tibetan Studies
D	Derge edition
IABS	International Association of Buddhist Studies
IBC	International Buddhist Confederation
Kṣudr-v(Bhī)	Kṣudr-v(Bhī) = M. Schmidt, „ <i>Bhikṣuṇī-Karmavācanā</i> : Die Handschrift Sansk. c.25(R) der Bodleian Library Oxford,“ Studien zur Indologie und Buddhismuskunde, Festgabe für Professor Dr. Heinz Bechert zum 60. Geburtstag am 26. Juni 1992, hg. R. Grünendahl, J.-U. Hartmann, P. Kieffer-Pülz, Bonn 1993 (Indica et Tibetica, 22), pp. 239-288.
MSV	<i>Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya</i>
Mvy	<i>Mahāvvyutpatti</i>
Pā	Pāli
Sch	Schmidt 1993
Skt.	Sanskrit
T.	Taishō edition (CBETA)
Tib.	Tibetan

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