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Who Are the *Chabbaggiya* Monks and Nuns?

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Who Are the *Chabbaggiya* Monks and Nuns?

Ven. Pandita (Burma)¹

Abstract

Modern scholarship has chosen to treat the *chabbaggiya* monks and nuns, commonly found in *Vinaya* narratives, as of fictitious nature. In this article, I argue against this modern contention.

Introduction

Chabbaggiya monks and nuns are very frequently found in *Vinaya* narratives as the first offenders of various *Vinaya* offenses. In the Pāli *Vinaya* itself, the *chabbaggiya* monks are the first offenders of the following rules:

1. Twelve rules of expiation with forfeiture (*nissaggiyapācittiya*),²

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² That is: the rules numbered 1 (*Vin* III 195; Horner, vol. 2, 2–3), 7 (*Vin* III 213–214; Horner, vol. 2, 50–51), 11 (*Vin* III 224; Horner, vol. 2, 71), 12 (*Vin* III 225; Horner, vol. 2, 74), 13 (*Vin* III 226; Horner, vol. 2, 76), 17 (*Vin* III 233–235; Horner, vol. 2, 94–95), 19 (*Vin* III 239; Horner, vol. 2, 106), 21 (*Vin* III 242; Horner, vol. 2, 113), 22 (*Vin* III 245–246; Horner, vol. 2,

2. Thirty-nine rules of expiation (*pācittiya*),³
3. The second *pāṭidesanīya* (“matters to be confessed”) rule (*Vin* IV 178; Horner vol. 3, 107),
4. All *sekhiya* rules (*Vin* IV 185–206; Horner, vol. 3, 120–152) except those numbered 51, 55, and 56.
5. Numerous legal issues in the *khandhakas*.⁴

On the other hand, the *chabbaggiya* nuns are the first offenders of the following rules:

1. The 8th rule of Defeat (*Pāt* 120–121; *Vin* IV 220–221; Horner, vol. 3: 173);

119–120), 24 (*Vin* III 252; Horner, vol. 2, 134–135), 26 (*Vin* III 256; Horner, vol. 2, 142–143), 30 (*Vin* III 265; Horner, vol. 2, 160–161).

³That is: the rules numbered 2 (*Vin* IV 4–5; Horner, vol. 2, 171), 3 (*Vin* IV 12; Horner, vol. 2, 186), 4 (*Vin* IV 14; Horner, vol. 2, 190), 9 (*Vin* IV 30–31; Horner, vol. 2, 219–220), 16 (*Vin* IV 42; Horner, vol. 2, 247–248), 17 (*Vin* IV 44; Horner, vol. 2, 250–251), 21 (*Vin* IV 49–51; Horner, vol. 2, 263–264), 23 (*Vin* IV 55–56; Horner, vol. 2, 276), 24 (*Vin* IV 57–58; Horner, vol. 2, 279), 27 (*Vin* IV 62; Horner, vol. 2, 288), 28 (*Vin* IV 64; Horner, vol. 2, 292), 31 (*Vin* IV 69–70; Horner, vol. 2, 303–304), 39 (*Vin* IV 87; Horner, vol. 2, 341), 47 (*Vin* IV 102; Horner, vol. 2, 369–370), 48 (*Vin* IV 104; Horner, vol. 2, 374), 49 (*Vin* IV 106; Horner, vol. 2, 377), 50 (*Vin* IV 107; Horner, vol. 2, 379), 52 (*Vin* IV 110; Horner, vol. 2, 387), 55 (*Vin* IV 114; Horner, vol. 2, 398), 60 (*Vin* IV 122–123; Horner, vol. 2, 414), 63 (*Vin* IV 126; Horner, vol. 3, 5), 69 (*Vin* IV 137; Horner, vol. 3, 27), 70 (*Vin* IV 139; Horner, vol. 3, 32–33), 72 (*Vin* IV 142–143; Horner, vol. 3, 40–41), 73 (*Vin* IV 144; Horner, vol. 3, 43), 74 (*Vin* IV 146; Horner, vol. 3, 47), 75 (*Vin* IV 146–147; Horner, vol. 3, 49), 76 (*Vin* IV 147; Horner, vol. 3, 51), 77 (*Vin* IV 148–149; Horner, vol. 3, 53), 78 (*Vin* IV 150; Horner, vol. 3, 55), 79 (*Vin* IV 151; Horner, vol. 3, 58–59), 81 (*Vin* IV 154; Horner, vol. 3, 64), 82 (*Vin* IV 155–156; Horner, vol. 3, 67–68), 85 (*Vin* IV 164; Horner, vol. 3, 82–83), 88 (*Vin* 169; Horner, vol. 3, 92), 89 (*Vin* IV 170; Horner, vol. 3, 94), 90 (*Vin* IV 172; Horner, vol. 3, 97), 91 (*Vin* IV 172; Horner, vol. 3, 99).

⁴ Those are too many to cite here, but some instances are: (*Vin* I 84–85; Horner, vol. 4, 107; *Vin* I 91; Horner, vol. 4, 117; *Vin* I 104–105; Horner, vol. 4, 136; *Vin* I 106; Horner, vol. 4, 138; *Vin* I 111; Horner, vol. 4, 145–146; *Vin* I 112–113; Horner, vol. 4, 148–149, etc., etc.)

2. The 1st rule of expiation with forfeiture, (*Pāt* 144–145; *Vin* IV 243; Horner, vol. 3: 213);
3. Fourteen rules of expiation;⁵
4. Two *pāṭidesanīya* rules (i.e., 1 and 2 (*Pāt* 224–225; *Vin* IV 346–347; Horner, vol. 3: 419, 422);
5. Two (*sekkhiya*) rules (*Pāt* 228–229; *Vin* IV 349–350; Horner, vol., 3: 424–425);
6. Several rules mentioned in the *Bhikkhunīkkhandhaka* (*Vin* II 262–263, 266–267, 269, 271, 280; Horner, vol. 5: 364, 369–371, 372–373, 374, 387–388).

Despite their common presence in the *Vinaya*, modern scholarship has generally viewed them as fictitious, rather than historical figures. I argue against this contention in this paper.

The Word Analysis

To solve this problem, it would be helpful to analyze the term *chabbaggiya* itself, which follows:

1. *cha* (“six”) + *vagga* (“group”) => *chas* + *vagga*

⁵ That is, those numbered 2 (*Pāt* 164–165; *Vin* IV 259–260; Horner, vol. 3: 226–227), 10 (*Pāt* 166–167; *Vin* IV 267–268; Horner, vol. 3: 261), 22 (*Pāt* 170–171; *Vin* IV 279; Horner, vol. 3: 285), 41 (*Pāt* 176–177; *Vin* IV 298; Horner, vol. 3: 324), 43 (*Pāt* 178–179; *Vin* IV 299–300; Horner, vol. 3: 328), 49 (*Pāt* 178–179; *Vin* IV 305; Horner, vol. 3: 337), 50 (*Pāt* 180–181; *Vin* IV 306; Horner, vol. 3: 339), 52 (*Pāt* 180–181; *Vin* IV 308–309; Horner, vol. 3: 343–344), 58 (*Pāt* 182–183; *Vin* IV 314–315; Horner, vol. 3: 356), 84 (*Pāt* 190–191; *Vin* IV 337; Horner, vol. 3: 400), 85 (*Pāt* 190–191; *Vin* IV 338; Horner, vol. 3: 402–403), 87 (*Pāt* 190–191; *Vin* IV 340; Horner, vol. 3: 406), 88 (*Pāt* 190–191; *Vin* IV 341; Horner, vol. 3: 407), 89 (*Pāt* 192–193; *Vin* IV 341; Horner, vol. 3: 408).

2. *Cha* has the original Skt. form *śaṣ*, of which the initial *ṣ* changes into *ch*,⁶ and the ending *ṣ* reappears here⁷ as *s*.⁸
3. *chas + vagga => chas + bagga*
4. The initial *v* of *vagga* is replaced by *b*.⁹
5. *chas + bagga => chabbagga* (“group of six”)
6. The consonant group *sb* assimilates into *bb*.¹⁰
7. *chabbagga + iya => chabbaggiya*

The final form *chabbaggiya* can have two alternative interpretations:

1. It can mean a *member* of the group of six; in this case, there cannot be more than six *chabbaggiya* persons. This usage can be compared to that of the term *pañcavaggiya* (PED “Pañca”), which means one or more members of the group of five.
2. Or it can mean a *follower* of the group of six; in this case, there can be an indefinite number of *chabbaggiya* persons. This usage can be compared to that of the term *sakyaputtiya* (“Sa-

⁶ “A simple initial sibilant of Skt. is sometimes aspirated in Pkt. *śha*, *ṣha*, *sha*, then all become uniformly *cha*.” (Pischel 181).

⁷ “The original final consonant of the first component often reappears in composition . . .” (Geiger 59).

⁸ In Pali, “The sibilants *ś, ṣ, s* . . . have all developed > *s*.” (27).

⁹ “. . . *b* occasionally appears in Pāli for Skt. *v* (*kabala* ‘morsel’ = Skt. *kavala*, *kabalikā* ‘compress’ = *Vin* I 205, 35 = Skt. *kavalikā*.)” (37)

¹⁰ Given that *s* is a sibilant whereas *b* is a mute, *s* is assimilated to *b*:

Moreover . . . the assimilation of consonants is characterized by the rule that the consonants of lesser power of resistance are assimilated to those of greater resisting power. The power of resistance diminishes in the order: mutes—sibilants—nasals—*l, v, y, r*. (41)

kya”), which means one or more followers of the *sakyaputta* (“the son of *Sakyas*, i.e., the Buddha”).

Horner’s Interpretation and the Resulting Issues

Owing to unknown reasons, Horner has entirely ignored the second option, and used the first one consistently to render the term *chabbaggiya* as the “group of six” monks, or as the “group of six” nuns, depending on the context (e.g. vol. 3, 173, 213, 216, etc.; vol. 5, 364, etc.). Her rendition has been adopted by modern scholars like Schopen (331, etc.), and Bhikkhu Sujato (*Bhikkhuni* 72, etc., *White* 229, etc.). Her interpretation, even though undisputed hitherto, has led to problems in evaluating the *Vinaya* narratives that involve those monks or nuns:

1. The *Vinaya* canon has no records regarding the identities of the “six monks” or the “six nuns.”
2. It appears odd that the groups of bad monks and nuns each had an equal number of six, no more, no less.
3. Given that there could not be more than six *chabbaggiya* monks, nor more than six *chabbaggiyā* nuns, it seems implausible that monks and nuns in such a small number have been the first offenders of so many rules shown above.

Modern scholarship has attempted to solve those problems accruing from Horner’s interpretation basically by treating those monks and nuns, and the episodes in which they appear, as later fabrications:

Barua (49) comments that “many laws are made by linking them up with the Chabbaggiya monks and the nuns . . . thus the historical background of some of the *Vinaya* episodes are doubtful.” Bhagvat (47f) notes that “whenever any

safeguard for an offence had to be laid down, the offence was often made up by linking it up with the almost imaginary figure of the *Chabbaggiya* Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis. The authenticity of these episodes, therefore, is doubtful.” Gokhale (18) similarly sees it as “possible that the *Chabbaggiya* episodes are manufactured after a favourite literary device.” Gräfe (x) concludes that the fabricated nature of several *Vinaya* tales in general is evident in the circumstance that the culprits are always the same. (Anālayo 417 fn. 35)

Regarding *Vinaya* narrations, Freedman (20) explains that “the Buddhist tradition does not see itself as the preserver of mere historical data . . . while likely rooted in certain historical events . . . the true aim . . . is rather a concern with preserving the soteriological and hagiographical elements of the ‘tradition.’” (417 fn. 36)

When considered from the perspective of the function of *Vinaya* narrative as an integral part of the training and education of monastics, the question of historical accuracy becomes, in fact, somewhat irrelevant. / The real point of the trope of the six monks or nuns is to provide a textual signifier to the audience that a story of bad conduct is about to be delivered. Those even a little familiar with *Vinaya* narratives will know only too well that, when certain personalities like the group of six monks or nuns are introduced, mischief can be expected. In the actual teaching situation, then, the mere mention of the notorious six creates an anticipation of yet another caricature of monastic behavior to be avoided, which helps keeping the details of the respective rule better in mind. (417–418)

However, the solution itself has seemingly brought forth new problems. How?

1. The *chabbaggiyas* are not always shown as villains. For example, in the narrative to the rule of expiation 37 (*Vin* IV 85; Horner vol. 2, 335–336), they were the righteous critics of the *sattarasavaggiya* monks, who ate at the wrong time and thereby made the Buddha prescribe the aforesaid rule. Furthermore, the *Mahākhanda* (*Vin* I 91; Horner vol. 4, 117) shows them giving guidance to the unconscientious, and thereby leading the Buddha to prescribe a rule against doing so. This story seemingly indicates that the former, at least the ones in this story, were good conscientious monks.
2. *Vinaya* narratives usually lead to new rules or regulations, or emendations of old ones. Therefore, being a *Vinaya* narrative itself makes the reader or listener to expect one or more not so commendable acts or events. Then, why should some trope of fictitious characters be required in this regard?
3. In many narratives leading to the *Pātimokkha* rules for monks and nuns, the first offender of the relevant rule is not named but merely mentioned as “a certain monk” (*aññataro bhikkhu*) or “a certain nun” (*aññatarā bhikkhunī*), or if more than one, merely as “monks” (*bhikkhū*) or “nuns” (*bhikkhuniyo*).¹¹ If

¹¹ Individual anonymous monks are the first offenders of the following offenses:

- A rule of expiation with forfeiture (*Vin* III 233; Horner, vol. 2, 90–91);
- Nine rules of expiation, i.e., those numbered 18 (*Vin* IV 46; Horner, vol. 2, 254–255), 25 (*Vin* IV 59; Horner, vol. 2, 282–283), 36 (*Vin* IV 83–84; Horner, vol. 2, 332–333), 40 (*Vin* IV 89; Horner, vol. 2, 344–345), 64 (*Vin* IV 127; Horner, vol. 3, 7–8), 66 (*Vin* IV 131; Horner, vol. 3, 15–16), 67 (*Vin* IV 132–133; Horner, vol. 3, 18–19), 80 (*Vin* IV 152–153; Horner, vol. 3, 61), 84 (*Vin* IV 161; Horner, vol. 3, 77);
- A rule of *pāṭidesaniya* (*Vin* IV 175–176; Horner, vol. 3, 103–104).

On the other hand, individual anonymous nuns are the first offenders of the following offenses:

- Two *saṅghādisesa* rules, i.e., those numbered 3 (*Vin IV 227–228*; Horner, vol. 3, 186–187), and 6 (*Vin IV 234*; Horner, vol. 3, 198–199);
- Fourteen rules of expiation, i.e., those numbered 4 (*Vin IV 261*; Horner, vol. 3, 249), 5 (*Vin IV 261*; Horner, vol. 3, 250), 6 (*Vin IV 263*; Horner, vol. 3, 252–253), 8 (*Vin IV 265*; Horner, vol. 3, 257–258), 11 (*Vin IV 268*; Horner, vol. 3, 263), 12 (*Vin IV 269*; Horner, vol. 3, 265), 13 (*Vin IV 270*; Horner, vol. 3, 266), 15 (*Vin IV 271–272*; Horner, vol. 3, 270), 18 (*Vin IV 275*; Horner, vol. 3, 277), 25 (*Vin IV 282*; Horner, vol. 3, 292), 55 (*Vin IV 312*; Horner, vol. 3, 350), 60 (*Vin IV 316*; Horner, vol. 3, 359), 86 (*Vin IV 339–340*; Horner, vol. 3, 404), and 96 (*Vin IV 344–345*; Horner, vol. 3, 417).

Moreover, groups of anonymous monks are the first offenders of the following offenses:

- Seven rules of expiation with forfeiture, i.e., those numbered 2 (*Vin III 198*; Horner, vol. 2, 12–13), 3 (*Vin III 203*; Horner, vol. 2, 24–26), 14 (*Vin III 227–228*; Horner, vol. 2, 79–80), 15 (*Vin III 230–232*; Horner, vol. 2, 83–87), 23 (*Vin III 248–251*; Horner, vol. 2, 126–131), 28 (*Vin III 260–261*; Horner, vol. 2, 151–153), and 29 (*Vin III 262–263*; Horner, vol. 2, 156–157);
- Ten rules of expiation, i.e., those numbered 5 (*Vin IV 15–16*; Horner, vol. 2, 194–195), 14 (*Vin IV 39*; Horner, vol. 2, 238–239), 33 (*Vin IV 75–77*; Horner, vol. 2, 315–317), 34 (*Vin IV 78–80*; Horner, vol. 2, 321–323), 35 (*Vin IV 81*; Horner, vol. 2, 326–327), 56 (*Vin IV 115*; Horner, vol. 2, 398–399), 57 (*Vin IV 116–117*; Horner, vol. 2, 401–402), 58 (*Vin IV 120*; Horner, vol. 2, 406–407), 65 (*Vin IV 128–130*; Horner, vol. 3, 10–12), 86 (*Vin IV 167*; Horner, vol. 3, 87–88);
- Two rules of *pāṭidesaniya*, i.e., those numbered 3 (*Vin IV 178–179*; Horner, vol. 3, 110–111), and 4 (*Vin IV 181–182*; Horner, vol. 3, 115–116);
- Three *sekhiya* rules, i.e., those numbered 51 (*Vin IV 197*; Horner, vol. 3, 137), 55 (*Vin IV 198*; Horner, vol. 3, 139), and 56 (*Vin IV 199*; Horner, vol. 3, 139–140).

On the other hand, groups of anonymous nuns are the first offenders of the following offenses:

- The *saṅghādisesa* rule numbered 12 (*Vin IV 239*; Horner, vol. 3, 207–208);
- Four rules of expiation with forfeiture, i.e., those numbered 6 (*Vin IV 250–251*; Horner, vol. 3, 228–229), 7 (*Vin IV 251–252*; Horner, vol. 3, 231–232), 8 (*Vin IV 252–253*; Horner, vol. 3, 233–234), and 9 (*Vin IV 253*; Horner, vol. 3, 235).

those narratives do not need the supposedly fictitious *chabbaggiya* monks and nuns as their respective first offenders, I wonder why certain other narratives should do so.

4. “*Vinaya* texts from various Buddhist traditions hold the *ṣaḍvārgika* [i.e., *chabbaggiya* in Pāli] monks accountable for most of these unlawful deeds and depict them as morally corrupted monastics” (Liu 179); “With the exception of the Chinese translation of *Sarvāstivādinaya* (T1435), a band of six nuns also appears in nearly all the extant *Vinaya* texts: the Pāli *Vinaya*, the Chinese translations of *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, and *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*. It is noteworthy that in the Tibetan and Chinese translations of *Mūlasarvāstivādhikṣuṇīvinaya*, members in the band of nuns have expanded from six to twelve” (fn 1). If those monks and nuns were only fictitious characters, they must have been in-

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- Thirty-nine rules of expiation, i.e., those numbered 7 (*Vin* IV 264; Horner, vol. 3, 255), 9 (*Vin* IV 266; Horner, vol. 3, 259), 17 (*Vin* IV 274; Horner, vol. 3, 275–276), 21 (*Vin* IV 278; Horner, vol. 3, 283), 24 (*Vin* IV 281; Horner, vol. 3, 290), 31 (*Vin* IV 288; Horner, vol. 3, 304), 32 (*Vin* IV 289; Horner, vol. 3, 305), 37 (*Vin* IV 295; Horner, vol. 3, 317), 38 (*Vin* IV 296; Horner, vol. 3, 319), 39 (*Vin* IV 296; Horner, vol. 3, 320), 40 (*Vin* IV 297; Horner, vol. 3, 322), 42 (*Vin* IV 299; Horner, vol. 3, 326–327), 44 (*Vin* IV 300; Horner, vol. 3, 329), 51 (*Vin* IV 306; Horner, vol. 3, 340), 54 (*Vin* IV 310–311; Horner, vol. 3, 348), 56 (*Vin* IV 313; Horner, vol. 3, 352), 57 (*Vin* IV 313–314; Horner, vol. 3, 354), 59 (*Vin* IV 315; Horner, vol. 3, 358), 61 (*Vin* IV 317; Horner, vol. 3, 361), 62 (*Vin* IV 318; Horner, vol. 3, 363), 63 (*Vin* IV 318–319; Horner, vol. 3, 364–366), 64 (*Vin* IV 320–321; Horner, vol. 3, 367–368), 65 (*Vin* IV 321–322; Horner, vol. 3, 369), 66 (*Vin* IV 322–323; Horner, vol. 3, 371), 67 (*Vin* IV 323–324; Horner, vol. 3, 373), 69 (*Vin* IV 325; Horner, vol. 3, 377), 71 (*Vin* IV 327; Horner, vol. 3, 381), 72 (*Vin* IV 327–328; Horner, vol. 3, 382), 73 (*Vin* IV 328; Horner, vol. 3, 383), 74 (*Vin* IV 329; Horner, vol. 3, 384), 75 (*Vin* IV 330; Horner, vol. 3, 385–386), 82 (*Vin* IV 336; Horner, vol. 3, 398), 83 (*Vin* IV 336–337; Horner, vol. 3, 399), 90 (*Vin* IV 342; Horner, vol. 3, 409), 91, 92, 93 (*Vin* IV 342–343; Horner, vol. 3, 411), 94 (*Vin* IV 343; Horner, vol. 3, 413), and 95 (*Vin* IV 344; Horner, vol. 3, 415).

vented at a very early stage, possibly even before the sectarian split of different schools in the Order. Yet, I cannot see any valid need for such a fabrication.

Therefore, it is high time to think seriously over the second interpretation that Horner has entirely ignored.

The Alternative Interpretation

In this interpretation, the *chabbaggiya* monks or *chabbaggiyā* nuns were the followers of the “group of six” (*chabbagga*, Skt. *ṣadvārga*) monks. The leaders, whoever they were, might not be very good persons, but if they had leadership qualities, they could win a large following of like-minded persons.

This interpretation is actually implied by the *Vinaya* commentary:

1. *Assajipunabbasukā nāmā ti Assajī c’ eva punabbasuko ca . . . te hi chabbaggiyānaṃ jeṭṭhakachabbaggiyā.* (*Sp* III 613–614 “The phrase *Assajipunabbasukā nāma* means: Assajī and Punabbasuka . . . They are leading *chabbaggiyas* of *chabbaggiya* monks.”).

The canon has recorded Assaji and Punabbasuka as the first offenders of the 13th *Samghādisesa* rule (Pāt 20–21; *Vin* III 179–184; Horner vol. 1, 314–325), as the first offenders of the rule that prohibits the dividing of common (*saṃghika*) property not fit to be divided (*Vin* II 171; Horner vol. 5, 239–240), and also as the first object of a formal act of banishment (*pabbājanīyakamma*) (*Vin* II 9–13; Horner vol. 5, 14–18), all while they were residing at Kīṭāgiri.

2. *Mettiyabhmmajakā ti Mettiyo c’ eva Bhummajako ca, chabbaggiyānaṃ aggapurisā ete* (*Sp* III 579 “The word *Mettiyabhumma-*

janakā means Mettiya and Bhummajaka. They are leading men of *chabbaggiyas*.”).

The canon has recorded Mettiya and Bhummajaka as the first offenders of the 8th and 9th *Samghādisesa* rules (*Pāt* 14–15, 16–17; *Vin* III 160–163, 166–167; Horner vol. 1, 275–281, 288–289), and the 13th Pure Expiation rule (*Pāt* 48–49; *Vin* IV 37–38; Horner vol. 2, 235), while they were residing at Rājagaha.

3. *Paṇḍukalohitakā ti Paṇḍuko c’ eva Lohitako cā ’ti chabbaggiyesu dve janā. Tesam nissitakāpi Paṇḍukalohitakā tv’ eva paññāyanti* (*Sp* VI 1155 “The word *Paṇḍukalohitakā* means: Paṇḍuka and Lohitaka, two people belonging to the *chabbaggiya* group. Those dependent upon them are also known as Paṇḍukalohitakas.”).

The canon has recorded Paṇḍuka and Lohitaka as the first object of a formal act of censure (*tajjanīyakamma*) (*Vin* II 1–2; Horner vol. 5, 1–2) while they were residing at Jetavana.

Out of the six monks mentioned above,¹² four are specifically named as leaders of the *chabbaggiya* group. If we apply Horner’s interpre-

¹²Cf.: Horner’s renditions of their names: *Assajipunabbasuka* (“followers of Assaji and Punabbasu”), *Paṇḍukalohitaka* (“followers of Paṇḍuka and Lohitaka”), *Mettiyabhummajaka* (“followers of Mettiya and Bhummajaka”). If Horner is correct, these terms refer to their followers of indefinite numbers, but there is no evidence to support her interpretation. Perhaps she is only following the authority of her predecessors, who have made similar translations: “followers of Paṇḍuka and Lohitaka” (Rhys Davids and Oldenberg, *Vinaya* II 329), “followers of Assaji and Punabbasu” (*Vinaya* II 347; *Vinaya* III 211).

On the contrary, the *Vinaya* commentary itself contradicts her rendition. How? From the explanation of *Assajipunabbasuka* as “Assaji and Punabbasuka,” we can infer that the commentator means only those two persons, not their followers who might be of an indefinite number. The same goes with *Mettiyabhummajaka* explained as “Mettiya and Bhummajaka.”

tation to the commentary, there would only be six *chabbaggiya* monks, out of which four were the leaders, but this seems absurd. Therefore, the commentator must have the second interpretation in his mind—i.e., that those six monks were the leaders of the *chabbaggiya* group—when he writes the texts above.

This is further corroborated by the story of those leaders, recorded by the commentator (Sp III 614) and extracted by DPPN as follows:

According to the *Samantapāsādikā* they were all of Sāvatti and all originally acquainted. Finding a living hard to obtain, they entered the Order under the two Chief Disciples. They decided among themselves that it was unwise for

It is only in the case of Paṇḍuka and Lohitaka that the commentator specifically mentions “those dependent upon them” (*taṃnissitakānaṃ*) as also covered by the term *Paṇḍukalohitaka*. Why? The context is the account of how those two monks were quarrelsome themselves and also encouraged other monks to quarrel, leading the Buddha to prescribe the formal act of censure (*tajjanīyakamma*) and to have the Order apply this against them. In their case, the object of censure should be not only those two but also those who accepted their encouragement and got into fights, for the canon says that if a monk is “a maker of strife, a maker of quarrels, a maker of disputes, a maker of contentions, a maker of legal questions,” he can be the object of censure (*Vin* II 4; Horner vol. 5, 6). But the canonical text consistently shows the object of censure using the term *paṇḍukalohitaka*. If this term is interpreted as referring to these two only, it would follow that those who did as they said were not subject to censure even though they were equally guilty; this would seemingly contradict the canon itself. It is probably to solve this problem that the commentator interprets *paṇḍukalohitaka* as covering their followers as well.

In my opinion, however, we can still reasonably interpret *paṇḍukalohitaka* as those two monks only. How? We should remember that such formal acts of censure are totally optional; the Order has the right to choose to, or not to, slap such a punishment on a guilty party. This is why the canon says *ākāṅkhamāno* (“if it so desires”) in the description of the individual types deserving censure (*Vin* II 4–5; Horner vol. 5, 6–7). Then, the Buddha and the Order in this story might have chosen to punish those two monks only, given that they were the root of the problem. This can be why the canonical story has consistently shown the object of censure as *paṇḍukalohitaka*.

them all to live in the same place, and they therefore divided into three groups . . . Each group had five hundred monks attached to it. (“Chabbaggiyā”)

Therefore, the *Vinaya* commentary supports the theory that the *chabbaggiya* monks (and nuns) were a group founded and led by the six monks named above. It means, according to the commentary, that even though the compilers of the *Vinaya* have recorded the names of the leaders in the cases where the latter themselves were the first offenders, the former has not bothered to name their followers but just dubbed them as “the followers of those six.” This is probably how *chabbaggiya* monks have appeared in the canon, and also how *chabbaggiyā* nuns have also appeared, which probably explains why there is not a single clue about the “six nuns” in the Pāli *Vinaya* literature.

If we adopt this interpretation, we can at least resolve three issues:

1. We can remove the oddity of bad monks and bad nuns having an equal number of six;
2. We can also view *chabbaggiya* monks and nuns as of an indefinite number, and thereby can explain why they are associated with a huge number of rules;
3. We can afford to treat those monks and nuns as historical figures, and thereby can explain why they are found across various *Vinaya* traditions.

However, there is still a catch. Just as the canon carries no information on the identities of the “six monks,” or of the “six nuns,” required by the first interpretation adopted by Horner, it also does not explicitly say that the aforesaid six monks, i.e., Assaji, etc., were actually the leaders of the *chabbaggiya* group. In fact, the sole source of this in-

formation is the *Vinaya* commentary. The question is: can we trust the commentary in this regard?

My answer is:

1. If we choose to trust the commentary, it means that we assume the commentary has somehow preserved the vital information—in this case, information that has gone missing from the canon. But this assumption would fully validate the second interpretation so that three issues given above can be resolved, and thereby would fulfill the requirement of Hoffman’s golden rule: “one assumption should solve at least two problems” (Karl Hoffman qtd. in Hinüber 7).
2. But if we reject the commentary in this regard, we will be left in the dark concerning the identities of those six leader monks. This lack of knowledge may throw doubt on the historicity of their followers, but it cannot conclusively prove that the latter are a mere myth.

In short, I argue that whether we accept or reject the commentarial information, the second interpretation remains simpler and more robust than Horner’s version, enough to replace the latter.

Abbreviations

- Pāt* William Pruitt, ed. *The Pātimokkha*. Translated by K. R. Norman, The Pali Text Society, 2001.
- Sp* J. Takakusu and M. Nagai, eds. *Samantapāsādikā: Buddhaghosa’s Commentary on the Vinaya Piṭaka*. 1924–1947. 7 vols., The Pali Text Society, 1966–1982.

Vin Hermann Oldenberg, ed. *Vinaya Piṭaka*. 1879–1883. 5 vols., The Pali Text Society, 1982–1997.

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