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Bhikṣuṇī Jampa Tsedroen and Bhikkhu Anālayo

Academy of World Religions & Center for Buddhist Studies,
University of Hamburg

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The *Gurudharma* on *Bhikṣuṇī* Ordination in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Tradition

Bhikṣuṇī Jampa Tsedroen and Bhikkhu Anālayo¹

Abstract

This article surveys the stipulation on *bhikṣuṇī* ordination made in the different *Vinayas* as part of a set of eight principles to be respected (*gurudharma*), and explores the possibility, indicated by the formulation of the relevant *gurudharma*, that a legally valid Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇī* ordination could be conducted by *bhikṣus* only.²

¹ Academy of World Religions & Center for Buddhist Studies, University of Hamburg.
Email: carola.roloff@uni-hamburg.de.

² The present paper takes its inspiration from discussions held between the two authors during the 1st Founding Members Conclave of the International Buddhist Confederation at Delhi, 9th to 12th September 2013. In part I of this paper, Anālayo surveys the *gurudharma* regulation on *bhikṣuṇī* ordination found in different *Vinayas*, while in part II Jampa Tsedroen examines the option of ordination by *bhikṣus* only, based on the formulation of the first *gurudharma* in the Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* in comparison with the Sanskrit version. Her findings in this respect are one of the outcomes of a research project on “The ordination of nuns in the Tibetan Buddhist canon and its presentation in the Tibetan commentaries” undertaken with the support of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, whose help is gratefully acknowledged. The authors

I. The *Gurudharma* On *Bhikṣuṇī* Ordination in Different *Vinayas*

According to tradition, the *gurudharmas*, “principles to be respected,” were stipulated by the Buddha as a pre-condition for granting his foster mother Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī the higher ordination. The different *Vinaya* texts report that by accepting these principles to be respected Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī became the first *bhikṣuṇī* (nun), marking the starting point for the coming into being of an order of *bhikṣuṇīs*.

While the different *Vinayas* agree in mentioning a set of eight such *gurudharmas*, the sequence in which these principles are listed varies considerably, as does their actual formulation.³ The themes broached by these eight principles to be respected concern matters of monastic etiquette, such as stipulating that a *bhikṣuṇī* should behave respectfully even towards a junior *bhikṣu* (monk), and the carrying out of legal acts. One legal act mentioned in all *Vinaya* lists of the eight *gurudharmas* is the procedure for conducting *bhikṣuṇī* ordination.

As a starting point for subsequent discussion, in what follows the different versions of this *gurudharma* that appear in the canonical *Vina-*

are indebted to Sāmaṇerī Dhammadinnā, Ann Heirman, and Petra Kieffer-Pülz for commenting on a draft version of the present paper.

³ For surveys of these eight rules see, e.g., Anālayo (“Women’s” 82–6), Cheng (*Buddhist* 83–100), Chung (“Gurudhamma”), Chung (“Ursprung” 13), Heirman (“Gurudharma”), Heirman (“Some Remarks” 34–43), Hirakawa (notes to 49–95), Horner (*Women* 118–61), Hüsken (“Eight”), Hüsken (“Legend” 46–58), Hüsken (*Vorschriften* 346–60), Kusumā (*Dasasil* 29–32), Nagata (283f), Nolot (397–405), Salgado, Sujato (*Bhikkuni* 51–81) and Waldschmidt (118–21).

yas are translated from the Chinese, Sanskrit and Pāli originals;⁴ the Tibetan version is taken up in more detail in the second part of the present paper. The translations below are given in alphabetical order according to the school affiliation of the respective *Vinaya*. The numbering given in brackets reflects the position of this particular *gurudharma* within the whole set of eight.

I.1 Translation

Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya* (no. 4): “A *śikṣamāṇā* (probationer) who has trained in the precepts should request the higher ordination from the community of *bhikṣus*.”⁵

Lokottaravāda-Mahāsāṃghika *Vinaya* (no. 2): “A girl of eighteen years, having been instructed in the training and having completed this training for two years, should seek the higher ordination from both communities.”⁶

⁴ Since the emphasis in our paper is on the canonical *Vinaya* versions and their implication for legal acts in the respective Buddhist traditions, the *gurudharma* stipulations found in T. 196 at T. IV 158c19 and T. 1478 at T. XXIV 946b25 are not taken into account. The relevant part of the *Vinayamātrkā* (毘尼母經), perhaps a text representing the Haimavata tradition, only reports the establishing of the eight *gurudharmas* by the Buddha, but does not list the actual *gurudharmas* individually; see T. 1463 at T. XXIV 803b13. The same is the case for T. 156 at T. III 154a1.

⁵ T. 1428 at T. XXII 923b8: 式叉摩那學戒已，從比丘僧乞受大戒；see also T. 1810 at T. XL 540c4; this and the following *gurudharmas* have already been translated by the Committee of Western Bhikṣuṇīs (3) and Heirman (“Where” 111).

⁶ Roth (17,5) (§13): *aṣṭādaśavarṣāye kumārībhūtāye dve varṣāṇi deśitaśikṣāye paripūrṇaśikṣāye ubhayato saṃghe upasampadā pratyāśamsitavyā*; this has already been translated by Nolot (9) and Strong (55).

Mahāsāṃghika *Vinaya* (no. 2): “Having trained for two years in the precepts, she receives higher ordination in both communities.”⁷

Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya* (no. 4): “A *śikṣamāṇā* who has trained in the precepts for two years should receive the higher ordination in both communities.”⁸

Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* (no. 1): “The *bhikṣuṇīs* should seek from the *bhikṣus* the going forth and the higher ordination, the becoming of a *bhikṣuṇī*.”⁹

⁷ T. 1425 at T. XXII 474c1: 二歲學戒, 二部眾中受具足; see also T. 1425 at T. XXII 471b12, which specifies that a woman who wishes to receive the higher ordination in the Tathāgata’s Dharma and Vinaya should also be fully eighteen years old; this has already been translated by Hirakawa (50f) and Heirman (“Where” 112).

⁸ T. 1421 at T. XXII 185c23: 式叉摩那學二□戒已, 應在二部僧中受具足戒; this has already been translated by Heirman (“Where” 112) and Sujato (*White* 20). As noted by Chung (“Gurudhamma” 228), here and in the case of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* the eight *gurudharmas* are mentioned again as part of the instruction to be given after completed ordination. In this context, T. 1421 at T. XXII 189a2 gives *gurudharma* 1 in the same formulation: 式叉摩那學二□戒已, 應在二部僧中受具足戒.

⁹ 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). The corresponding Sanskrit fragments have been edited by Ridding and La Vallée Poussin (125,30) and again by Schmidt (“*Bhikṣuṇī-Karmavācānā*” 244,21) (§4b5): *bhikṣubhyaḥ śakāsād ānanda mātrgrāmena pravrajyopasampad bhikṣuṇībhāvaḥ pratikāṃkṣitavya*; this has already been translated by Wilson in Paul (85). On the school affiliation of these fragments, see Chung (“*Bhikṣuṇī-Karmavācānā*” 420), Finnegan (*For the Sake* 310 note 591), Oberlies (62), Roth (5 note 3b), Schmidt (“Zur Schulzugehörigkeit”), and Yuyama (6). The same *gurudharma* is also quoted in the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*, Wogihara (374,18): *bhikṣor antikād bhikṣuṇīnām upasampat bhikṣuṇībhāvaḥ*. As in the case of the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*, here, too, the eight *gurudharmas* are mentioned again as part of the instruction to be given after completed ordination, at which point *gurudharma* 1 is given as follows, T. 1453 at T. XXIV 464c3: “The *bhikṣuṇīs* should request from the *bhikṣus* the higher ordination, the becoming of a *bhikṣuṇī*,” 諸苾芻尼應從苾芻求受近圓, 成苾芻尼性. Notably, in this formulation the giving of the going forth by *bhikṣus* only is no longer mentioned; on the formal going

Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* (no. 2): “A *bhikṣuṇī* should request the higher ordination from the community of *bhikṣus*.”¹⁰

Saṃmitīya *Vinaya* (1): “A *bhikṣuṇī* should certainly seek the gaining of the higher ordination from the community of *bhikṣus*.”¹¹

Theravāda *Vinaya* (no. 6): “A *śikṣamāṇā* who has trained for two years in six principles should seek for higher ordination from both communities.”¹²

forth not being an indispensable requirement for the validity of higher ordination in the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition see Clarke (228–230). The instruction to be given after completing ordination has also been preserved in the Sanskrit fragment Schmidt (“*Bhikṣuṇī-Karmavācanā*” 269,8) (§29b5), which does mention the going forth (see below note 58). A more detailed discussion of the Tibetan translation of this *gurudharma* in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* can be found in the second part of this article.

¹⁰ T. 1435 at T. XXIII 345c10: 比丘尼應從比丘僧乞受具戒。This is not part of the account of the foundation of the order of *bhikṣuṇīs*, which in the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* is given in abbreviated form in T. 1435 at T. XXIII 291a1. The full account has been preserved in a *Madhyama-āgama* discourse, however, where a similar formulation can be found: MĀ 116 at T. I 606a5: “a *bhikṣuṇī* should seek the higher ordination from the *bhikṣus*,” 比丘尼當從比丘求受具足; translated in Anālayo (“Mahāpajāpatī’s” 279). The same formulation is also found in T. 60 at T. I 857b1. These two discourse versions differ from the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* insofar as, according to them, this is the first of the eight *gurudharmas*, not the second.

¹¹ T. 1461 at T. XXIV 670c6: 比丘尼必定從比丘僧求得受具足戒。

¹² Vin II 255,19: *dve vassāni chasu dhammesu sikkhitasikkhāya sikkhamānāya ubhatosaṅghe upasampadā pariyesitabbā*; this has already been translated by Horner (*Book V* 355); also see AN 8.51 at AN IV 277,9, which has been translated by Bodhi (1190), Hare (184), and Nyanatiloka and Nyanaponika (151). Here and elsewhere, Sanskrit terms are used even when translating from the Pāli, in order to facilitate comparison.

I.2 Comparative study

Comparing the canonical *Vinaya* versions of the *gurudharma* stipulation concerning how *bhikṣuṇī* ordination should be carried out brings to light two significant differences. One of these two differences concerns the period to be observed as a probationer, or *śikṣamāṇā*. While the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya* version simply speaks of a *śikṣamāṇā* who has trained in the precepts, the Mahāsāṃghika, Mahīśāsaka, and Theravāda *Vinaya* versions note that her probationary period lasts for two years. The Lokottaravāda-Mahāsāṃghika *Vinaya* also indicates that she should be eighteen years old. The Theravāda *Vinaya* provides still further detail, as it mentions that during these two years the *śikṣamāṇā* has to observe six rules.

Alongside these variations in the degree to which the details of the probationary training are introduced, perhaps the most prominent difference among these versions is that the formulations of this *gurudharma* in the Mūlasarvāstivāda, Sarvāstivāda, and Saṃmitīya *Vinayas* do not mention the need to observe a probationary period at all. In order to evaluate the significance of this difference, it is necessary to turn to another rule in those *Vinayas* that do mention the probationary period (the Dharmaguptaka, Mahīśāsaka, and Theravāda *Vinayas*), namely the regulation against ordaining a woman who is pregnant.¹³ In these three *Vinayas*, this rule reads as follows:

¹³ According to the comparative survey of the *bhikṣuṇī prātimokṣas* in Kabilsingh (*Comparative* 116), the Mahāsāṃghika *Vinaya* does not have such a rule.

Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya* (no. 119): “If a *bhikṣuṇī* admits a pregnant woman and confers on her the higher ordination, this is a *pātayantika*.”¹⁴

Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya* (no. 116): “If a *bhikṣuṇī* gives the higher ordination to a pregnant woman, this is a *pātayantika*.”¹⁵

Theravāda *Vinaya* (no. 61): “Whatever *bhikṣuṇī* should ordain a pregnant woman, this is a *pātayantika*.”¹⁶

The above versions are in fairly close agreement on this rule. The narration that precedes this rule reports that the *bhikṣuṇīs* had indeed ordained a pregnant woman. The repercussions that her condition caused among the laity occasioned the laying down of a regulation to prevent this from happening again in the future. Now the problem caused by ordaining a pregnant woman would not have arisen in the first place if it had been established procedure that any female candidate for higher ordination needs to have completed a two year training period as a *śikṣamāṇā*.¹⁷ The same three *Vinayas* explicitly indicate that such training comprises the observing of celibacy,¹⁸ hence it would have been

¹⁴ T. 1428 at T. XXII 754b26: 若比丘尼度他妊娠女人, 授具足戒者, 波逸提; this has been translated by Heirman (*Discipline* 763) and Kabilsingh (*Bhikkhuni* 194), and discussed by Heirman (“Where” 117).

¹⁵ T. 1421 at T. XXII 92b3: 若比丘尼與懷妊 (with 任 as a variant reading) 女受具足戒, 波逸提; this has been translated in Kabilsingh (*Bhikkhuni* 109).

¹⁶ Vin IV 317,20: *yā pana bhikkhuni gabbhiniṃ vuṭṭhāpeyya, pācittiyā ti*; this has been translated by Horner (*Book III* 361), Hüsken (*Vorschriften* 245), and Kabilsingh (*Bhikkhuni* 24).

¹⁷ This has been pointed out by, e.g., Anālayo (“Women’s” 83f), Heirman (*Discipline* 796 note 122), Heirman (“Some” 69f), Hüsken (*Vorschriften* 353), Kieffer-Pülz (“Ehe-” 202 note 9), Shi (420), and Sujato (*Bhikkhuni* 192f).

¹⁸ Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, T. 1428 at T. XXII 924b7; Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*, T. 1421 at T. XXII 186b17; and Theravāda *Vinaya*, Vin IV 319,26. As noted by Hüsken (*Vorschriften* 251

impossible to complete the period successfully and be pregnant, if such training had indeed be in existence right from the time the order of *bhikṣuṇīs* came into existence.

Thus the formulation of the *gurudharma* concerning *bhikṣuṇī* ordination in the Dharmaguptaka, Mahīśāsaka, and Theravāda *Vinayas* results in an internal inconsistency, as it implies that the probationary training was promulgated by the Buddha at the time when the order of *bhikṣuṇīs* began. This makes it safe to conclude that the formulation used in these *Vinayas* is the result of a later development. By contrast, the Mūlasarvāstivāda, Sarvāstivāda, and Saṃmitīya *Vinayas*, which do not mention the need to observe a probationary period at all, appear to present an earlier formulation of this *gurudharma*.

Another difference between the *Vinaya* versions of the *gurudharma* on *bhikṣuṇī* ordination concerns the question of who should confer the higher ordination: Should the female candidate request higher ordination from both communities, or just from the community of *bhikṣus*? While the formulation of the *gurudharma* in the Lokottaravāda-Mahāsāṃghika, Mahāsāṃghika, Mahīśāsaka, and the Theravāda *Vinayas* stipulates ordination by both communities, the *gurudharma* in the Dharmaguptaka, Mūlasarvāstivāda, Sarvāstivāda, and Saṃmitīya *Vinayas* mentions only ordination given by *bhikṣus*.

Taking into account the narrative context in which the promulgation of the *gurudharmas* is embedded, it was only after Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī had become a *bhikṣuṇī* by accepting these eight *gurudharmas*

note 647), the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* explicitly links the training as a probationer to the need to find out whether a candidate is pregnant, T. 1435 at T. XXIII 326b17: “From now on I prescribe that a *śrāmaṇerikā* trains for two years in the six principles, [so] it can be understood if she is pregnant or not”, 從今聽沙彌尼二□學六法，可知有娠無娠。

that an order of *bhikṣuṇīs* came into being.¹⁹ Hence it would be more natural for the Buddha to ask, as a precondition for granting her higher ordination, that the higher ordination of women be conducted in a way that was possible at that time, namely, through a community of *bhikṣus*, instead of requiring the cooperation of a community of *bhikṣuṇīs*, which at the time was yet to come into being.²⁰

Thus the reference to ordination by *bhikṣus* in the Dharmaguptaka, Mūlasarvāstivāda, Sarvāstivāda, and Saṃmitīya *Vinayas* appears to reflect an earlier formulation of this particular *gurudharma*.²¹ In contrast, the reference to ordination by both communities – a community of *bhikṣus* and a community of *bhikṣuṇīs* – in the *gurudharma* in the Lokottaravāda-Mahāsāṃghika, Mahāsāṃghika, Mahīśāsaka, and Theravāda *Vinayas*, seems to be the result of a later change in the formulation, probably influenced by the way the higher ordination of *bhikṣuṇīs* was carried out at the time of the compilation of these *Vinayas*.²²

¹⁹ A more detailed study of the evolution of *bhikṣuṇī* ordination, especially of the ordination of the followers of Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī, is presently in preparation.

²⁰ As pointed out by Tsedroen (“Relevance” 11), “it makes sense that the dual ordination is not yet mentioned, because there was no order of nuns at the time when these rules were set up.”

²¹ This position has already been argued by Jampa Tsedroen (“Foundation”) for the Mūlasarvāstivāda *gurudharma*.

²² Nevertheless, the account given in the Theravāda *Vinaya* can be read coherently as a legal document. On such a reading, which is the viewpoint that would be adopted by adherents of the tradition, the *gurudharma* stipulation could be seen as setting the general trend for the future, which was then supplemented by a permission for *bhikṣus* to ordain *bhikṣuṇīs* as an exception applicable to a situation when no community of *bhikṣuṇīs* is in existence; as discussed in Anālayo (“Legality”).

The historicity of the *gurudharmas* is a rather doubtful matter.²³ Nevertheless, the point in time when the *gurudharmas* came into being must still be fairly early, since they are found in all *Vinayas*. When evaluated from the viewpoint of their narrative context, it seems clear that the formulations of the *gurudharma* concerning *bhikṣuṇī* ordination found in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda*, *Sarvāstivāda*, and *Śaṃmitīya Vinayas* reflect an earlier version. This earlier version did not yet stipulate the necessity of training as a *sikṣamāna* and it prescribed ordination given by *bhikṣus* only, not by both communities.

From a traditional viewpoint, the *gurudharmas* are of course considered as legally binding as any other canonical *Vinaya* rule. Thus the indication that ordination given by *bhikṣus* only would be a valid form of higher ordination is of considerable legal significance, since it points to the possibility that an order of *bhikṣuṇīs* could be initiated in the Tibetan *Mūlasarvāstivāda* tradition in this way.²⁴ A closer study of this option is the topic of the second part of this paper.

²³ See, e.g., Anālayo (“Women’s renunciation” 82–86), Chung (“Buddhist” 87), Chung (“Ursprung” 13), Gnanarama (70), Hüsken (“Eight”), Hüsken (Vorschriften 346–60), Kieffer-Pülz (“buddhistische” 378 note 378), Kusumā (“Inaccuracies” 8), Shih (420f), Sujato (*Bhikkhuni* 51–81), and Verma (73).

²⁴ Regarding the alternative options of dual ordination done with the assistance of Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇīs*, Kieffer-Pülz (“Presuppositions” 223 and 225) comments: “If considered only in terms of traditional law, then it is seemingly not possible for the *Mūlasarvāstivādin* to accept Dharmaguptaka ordination in a way that allows them to carry out formal procedures together.” It would be “far less controversial . . . [if] the *Mūlasarvāstivāda bhikṣuṇī* lineage would be re-established by first ordaining the female candidates through the *Mūlasarvāstivāda bhikṣu saṅgha*.” The same holds true for the Theravāda tradition, where ordination by *bhikṣus* only appears to be legally valid in a situation where no *bhikṣuṇī* order is in existence, an option that in traditional eyes is certainly far less controversial than an ordination carried out with the assistance of Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇīs*; see Anālayo (“Revival”).

II. Mūlasarvāstivāda *Bhikṣuṇī* Ordination by *Bhikṣus*

This section of the paper examines the legal significance of the *gurudharma* concerning *bhikṣuṇī* ordination in relation to the question of whether such ordination can, in accordance with the Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* tradition, be conferred by *bhikṣus* only without infringing the rules.²⁵

II.1 *The original promulgation of gurudharma 1*

In what follows, the study of the first *gurudharma* is based on collating 13 different Kangyur editions of the **Bhikṣuṇīkarmavācanā* section in the *Vinayaḥsūdrakavastu* (*'Dul ba phran tshegs kyi gzhi*) and comparing them with what has been preserved in the respective Sanskrit fragments, ms. c.25(R) of the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford.²⁶ While the text as a whole is only preserved in Tibetan translation, the *gurudharma* we are concerned with here is fully preserved in three different places in the Sanskrit manuscript.

²⁵ For the Theravāda *Vinaya*, ordination by *bhikṣus* alone has recently already been discussed in detail in Anālayo (“Legality” 316, 325–332). From this it is clear that, in case an ordination in cooperation with an existing *bhikṣuṇī* community is not possible, from a Theravāda perspective higher ordination of nuns by *bhikṣus* on their own is valid.

²⁶ Edited by Ridding and de La Vallée Poussin and re-edited by Schmidt (“*Bhikṣuṇī-Karmavācanā*”). The manuscript appears to have consisted of 32 folios, of which 25 folios are preserved, while seven folios are missing: 1–2, 8, 12–14, and 32.

The 13 Kangyur editions of the Tibetan **Bhikṣuṇīkarmavācanā* (**Mahāprajāpatīgautamīvastu* and **Bhikṣuṇyupasaṃpadājñāpti*) in the *Vinayakṣudrakavastu*²⁷ in which *gurudharma* 1 is attested are as follows:²⁸

L: London Shelkar	(<i>dul ba</i>), <i>bam po</i> 37-38, <i>na</i> , 21a8-50b7
R: Gyantse Tempangma	(<i>dul ba</i>), <i>bam po</i> 37-38, <i>na</i> , 19a6-45b1
T: Tōyō bunko	(<i>dul ba</i>), <i>bam po</i> 37-38, <i>na</i> , 20a4-48a5
N: Narthang	(<i>dul ba</i>), <i>bam po</i> 37-38, <i>da</i> , 326b5-360b2
H: Lhasa	(<i>dul ba</i>), <i>bam po</i> 36-37, <i>da</i> , 150b5-182a6
S: Stog	(<i>dul ba</i>), <i>bam po</i> 37-38, <i>tha</i> , 146a4-178a5
Z: Shey	(<i>dul ba</i>), <i>bam po</i> 37-38, <i>tha</i> , 154b1-188b4
F: Phudrag	(<i>dul ba</i>), <i>bam po</i> 31-32, <i>tha</i> , 124a6-149a6
Q: Peking 1737	(<i>dul ba</i>), <i>bam po</i> 36-37, <i>ne</i> , 97a6-116a2
K: K'ang hsi	(<i>dul ba</i>), <i>bam po</i> 36-37, <i>phe-be</i> , 378a7-15a8
J: Jang Satham (Lithang)	(<i>dul ba</i>), <i>bam po</i> 36- 37, <i>da</i> , 99a1-118b1
B: Berlin ²⁹	(<i>dul ba</i>), <i>bam po</i> 36-37, <i>na-pa</i> , 360b8-12a6

²⁷ Unlike the case of the *Vinayavastu*, the translation of the *Kṣudrakavastu* was not revised. See Skorupski (*Catalogue* 4, 23).

²⁸ In this article we are only able to provide such a detailed collation for passages from the *Mūlasarvāstivāda* Vinaya, not for others passages. The siglas are according to the Kanjur Resources: <http://www.istb.univie.ac.at/kanjur/xml3/sub/sigla.php> (accessed October 13, 2013). In addition to the 13 editions listed above, readings from the *Dpe bsdur ma* edition have also been noted as *Dpe*.

²⁹ Peking 1680. See <http://www.istb.univie.ac.at/kanjur/xml3/editions/berlin.php> (accessed October 13, 2013).

D: Derge (‘dul ba), bam po 36-37, da, 100a3-120b1

The first occurrence is the original promulgation of the *gurudharma* by the Buddha:

*kun dga’ bo dge slong rnams las³⁰ bud med rnams³¹ kyis³² rab tu
’byung³³ ba dang bsnyen³⁴ par rdzogs nas dge slong ma’i dngos
por ’gyur³⁵ ba³⁶ rab tu rtogs par bya’o.³⁷*

Ānanda, after women have received the going forth and the higher ordination from *bhikṣus*,³⁸ they should well understand that they [attained] the status of a *bhikṣuṇī*.³⁹

The Tibetan version differs from the corresponding Sanskrit fragment,⁴⁰ which reads:

³⁰ *las* LRTNHSZFQJD : *lus* KB.

³¹ *rnams* LRTNHSZQKBJD : om. F.

³² *kyis* LRTNHSQKBJD : *kyi* ZF.

³³ *byung* F : *’byung* LRTNHSZQKBJD.

³⁴ *bsnyen* LRTNHSZQKBJD : *snyen* F.

³⁵ *’gyur* LRTNHSZFQKJD : om. B.

³⁶ *ba* LRTNHSZQKJD : om. B; *bar* F.

³⁷ L 24b4; R 22a3; T 23b2; N 330b1; H 154a5; S 149b2; Z 157b3; F 127a5; Q 99b1; K 381b4; B 363b8; J 101a5; D 102a7; see Dpe 245.20.

³⁸ On the translation “higher ordination” or “full ordination” for *upasampadā* see Deleanu (“Transmission” 3) and Tsedroen (“Erleuchtungspotenzial” 159).

³⁹ The Tibetan *dge slong ma’i dngos por ’gyur ba* would correspond to *bhikṣuṇībhāvaḥ*, “the having become a *bhikṣuṇī*” or “*bhikṣuṇī*hood”.

⁴⁰ Schmidt (“*Bhikṣuṇī-Karmavācānā*” 244,21 §4b4): *bhikṣubhyaḥ sakāśād ānanda mātrgrāmeṇa pravrajyopasampad bhikṣuṇībhāvaḥ pratikāṃkṣitavya*; this has already been

Ānanda, the going forth, higher ordination and the status of being a *bhikṣuṇī* should be expected by a woman from the *bhikṣus*.⁴¹

The second occurrence is when the *gurudharma* is reported by Ānanda to Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī:

*kun dga' bo dge slong las*⁴² *bud med rnams kyis rab tu 'byung*⁴³
*ba dang bsnyen*⁴⁴ *par rdzogs te dge slong ma'i dngos por*⁴⁵ *rab tu*
rtogs par bya'o.⁴⁶

Ānanda, receiving the going forth and the higher ordination from the *bhikṣus*, women should well understand that they [attain] the status of a *bhikṣuṇī*.

The Sanskrit fragment reads:

Ānanda, the going forth, higher ordination, and the status of a *bhikṣuṇī* should be expected by a woman from the *bhikṣus*.⁴⁷

translated by Wilson in Paul (85); for the parallel in the Chinese translation of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, see above note 9.

⁴¹ Skt. singular *mātrgrāma*; Tib. plural: *bud med nams*.

⁴² *las* LRTNHSZFQKBJD : *lus* B : *la* F.

⁴³ *'byung* QKBJD : *byung* LRTNHSZF.

⁴⁴ *bsnyen* LRTNHSZQKBJD : *snyen* F.

⁴⁵ *por* QKBJD : *po* LRTNHSZF.

⁴⁶ L 26a5; R 23b2; T 25a3; N 332a5; H 156a1; S 151a4; Z 159a7; F 128b5; Q 100b2; K 383a5; B 365a8; J 102a7; D 103b1; see Dpe 248.13.

⁴⁷ Schmidt (“*Bhikṣuṇī-Karmavācanā*” 246,26 §6b2): *bhikṣubhyaḥ sakāśād ānanda mātrgrāmeṇa pravrajyā upasaṃpad bhikṣuṇībhāvaḥ pratikāṃkṣitavyam*; for the Chinese parallel see above note 9.

II.2 Gurudharma 1 in the ordination manual

Instructions for the procedure to be adopted in the higher ordination of *bhikṣuṇī* are given in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* just after the narrative of Mahāprajāpati's going forth. Although the wording is almost the same as before, the legal implications are different due to the placement of the *gurudharma* at the end of the manual for the *bhikṣuṇī* ordination rite (*dge slong ma bsnyen par rdzogs par nye bar sgrub pa'i cho ga*).

The *bhikṣuṇī* ordination manual starts with the provision for admission, the taking of refuge, and the receiving of the precepts for lay followers (Tib. *dge bsnyen ma*, Skt. *upāsikā*), followed by the going forth (Tib. *rab tu byung ba*, Skt. *pravrajyā*), the taking of the precepts for novices (Tib. *dge tshul ma*, Skt. *śrāmaṇerikā*),⁴⁸ and of the precepts for probationers (Tib. *dge slob ma*, Skt. *śikṣamāṇā*) from *bhikṣuṇīs*, and then culminates in the higher ordination. On the day of the higher ordination, the *śikṣamāṇā*, who should have observed her precepts for two years, first receives a formal agreement to become ordained, known as the *brahmacyopasthānasamṃvṛti* (*tshangs par spyod pa la rim gror bya ba'i sdom pa*),⁴⁹ from a community of twelve *bhikṣuṇīs*.⁵⁰ Later on the same day, the high-

⁴⁸ Notably, in the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition *pravrajyā* and *śrāmaṇerikā* ordination are considered two different steps. In the living tradition, there are women, especially in the Karma Kagyü tradition, who have received the five *upāsikā* precepts and the going forth, but not the *śrāmaṇerikā* precepts. Legally they are considered to be lay women, although they usually live in a “nunnery.” In society they are referred to as “nuns” (*ani*), the same expression as used for *śrāmaṇerikās*. The main difference is that their lower robe (Tib. *sham thabs*; Skt. *nivāsana*) has no patches and they have no yellow/orange upper robe (Tib. *stod g.yogs*, Skt. *uttarāsaṅga*, Mvy 8934 *bla gos*), which *śrāmaṇerikās* wear during ceremonies.

⁴⁹ Regarding this term, see Kieffer-Pülz (“Presuppositions” 218 n. 4) and Sujato (“Vuṭṭhāna” 13f).

⁵⁰ According to the traditional understanding, this is a vow given before the actual *bhikṣuṇī* vow is taken; it is regarded as an intermediate discipline that is substantially

er ordination is given in the presence of a two-fold community of ten *bhikṣus* and twelve *bhikṣuṇīs*.⁵¹

After ascertaining the time when the higher ordination has been received, the principles or guidelines to be observed are announced by the *karmakāraka-bhikṣu* (*las byed pa'i dge slong pha*). These principles are:

1. The three supports of life (Tib. *gnas gsum*, Skt. *trayo niśrayāḥ*),
2. The eight defeats (Tib. *phas pham pa brgyad*, Skt. **aṣṭau pārājikā dharmāḥ*, see Mvy 8358),
3. The eight principles to be respected (Tib. *bla ma'i chos brgyad*, Skt. *aṣṭau gurudharmāḥ*) and
4. The four dharmas for a recluse (Tib. *dge sbyong gi chos bzhi*, Skt. *catvāraḥ śramaṇikāraka dharmāḥ*).

The formulation for the first *gurudharma* in this context is as follows:

*ming 'di zhes bya ba bud med*⁵² *kyis*⁵³ *dge slong rnams las rab tu byung zhing bsnyen*⁵⁴ *par rdzogs nas dge slong ma'i dngos por 'gyur bar*⁵⁵ *rab tu rtogs par bya'o*.⁵⁶

the same as the *śikṣamāṇā* vow; see the Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo (2: 2254): *tshangs spyod nyer gnas kyi sdom pa: dge slong ma'i sdom pa dngos ma blangs sngon la 'bog pa'i sdom pa zhig ste, dge slob ma'i sdom pa dang rdzas rigs gcig pa bar ma'i tshul khrims so*.

⁵¹ The details will be discussed in another article presently in preparation. Here we focus on the *gurudharma* only.

⁵² Here the Tibetan has, different from above, not the plural *bud med rnams*, but the singular *bud med*.

⁵³ *kyis* TFQKBJD : *kyi* LRNHSZ.

⁵⁴ *bsnyen* LRTNHSZQKBJD : *snyen* F.

⁵⁵ *'gyur bar* LRTNHSZFQKBJD : *gyur pa* F.

[You], named so-and-so, after a woman has received the going forth and the higher ordination from the *bhikṣus*, she should fully understand that she has become a *bhikṣuṇī*.⁵⁷

The Sanskrit fragment repeats the formulation used earlier, except that it adds the specification “named so-and-so.” Thus it reads:

[You], named so-and-so, the going forth, the higher ordination and the state of being a *bhikṣuṇī* should be expected by a woman from the *bhikṣus*.⁵⁸

What is rather significant here is not the slight variation in the formulation of this *gurudharma*, but the fact that it is part of the manual for *bhikṣuṇī* ordination (Skt. **bhikṣuṇyupasaṃpadājñāpti*) and thus integral part of the *bhikṣuṇī* ordination rite (Tib. *dge slong ma sgrub pa'i cho ga*, in short *ma chog*, Skt. **bhikṣuṇī karmavidhi*), which can be expected to have

⁵⁶ L 48b1; R 43b2; T 46a2; N 358a2; H 180a1; S 175b7; Z 185b8; F 147a4; Q 114b2; K 12b7; B 10a7; J 116b8; D 118b7; Dpe 286.16.

⁵⁷ Other occurrences of this *gurudharma* can be found in the “Section on Rites and Acts in connection with the *bhikṣuṇī pravrajyāvastu*” (*dge slong ma'i rab tu byung ba'i gzhi'i skabs kyi cho ga dang las rnams*) in the *Ekottarakarmaśataka*, D 4118, (*'dul ba*), *wu*, 139a1: *ming 'di zhes bya ba dge slong mas dge slong rnams las rab tu 'byung ba dang bsnyen par rdzogs pa dge slong ma'i dngos po yongs su btsal bar bya ba*; as well as in the *Abhidharma-kośopayikāṭikā*, D 4094 (*mngon pa*), *ju*, 213a2: *kun dga' bo bud med kyi tshogs dag gis rab tu byung zhing bsnyen par rdzogs pa dge slong ma'i dngos po dge slong dag las blang bar bya ste*.

⁵⁸ Schmidt (“*Bhikṣuṇī-Karmavācanā*” 269,5 §29b5): *bhikṣubhyaḥ śakāsād evaṃnāmike mātrgrāmeṇa pravrajyā upasaṃpat bhikṣuṇībhāvaḥ pratikāṃkṣitavya*. The whole four-part announcement is also found in the *Vinayasūtra*, which similarly at this point refers in an abbreviated manner to *gurudharma* 1; see Bapat and Gokhale (53,14): *upasaṃpad bhikṣubhyaḥ*; see also T. 1453 at T. XXIV 464c3.

been used in India for centuries, that is, until the time when the Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇī* order ceased to exist.⁵⁹

From a legal perspective, an ordination received by accepting the eight *gurudharmas* is considered an ancient rite (*sngon chog*),⁶⁰ whereas the ordination received before both communities became the current rite (*da chog*),⁶¹ and it is this current rite that should be followed. Yet, the advice to receive the going forth and the higher ordination from *bhikṣus* remained part of the latter rite, i.e., the current rite, and is therefore still valid. A prohibition (*dgag pa*) that an ordination cannot be performed by *bhikṣus* alone is in fact not recorded in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*.⁶²

To summarize, the indication that *bhikṣuṇīs* should receive ordination from *bhikṣus* is, depending on circumstances, still valid. In legal terms as understood in the living tradition, the first *gurudharma* would have to be considered either as a permission (*gnang ba*) or as a prescription (*sgrub pa*).

Of course, this does not mean that *bhikṣus* can give higher ordination solely by means of asking Buddhist women to accept the eight *gurudharmas*, that is, just by stating that accepting the eight *gurudharmas* is their going forth and higher ordination in the same way that, according to the texts, the Buddha did in the case of Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī.⁶³ In-

⁵⁹ A more detailed discussion of the transmission of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇī* ordination is presently in process.

⁶⁰ Tib. *sngon gyi cho ga*, Skt. *purākalpa*; see Mvy 9281.

⁶¹ Tib. *da ltar byung ba'i cho ga*, Skt. *vartamānakalpa*.

⁶² See Geshe Rinchen Ngödrup's statement in Mohr and Tsedroen (*Dignity* 261, note 4).

⁶³ As pointed out by Tsering ("Lamp" 164f): "Today women cannot be fully ordained through simply accepting the *gurudharmas*. They should be ordained gradually by means of the present ceremonial rite (*da ltar gyi cho ga*)"; see Tsering (*Nyams zhib* 31); also see the statement by Samdhong Rinpoche in Mohr and Tsedroen (*Dignity* 255).

stead, it means that, depending on circumstances, *bhikṣus* today can give the going forth as well as the higher ordination to *bhikṣuṇīs*. The permission to do so has never been withdrawn and thus is still valid. In such a case, even a minor fault (Tib. *nyes byas*, Skt. *duṣkṛta*) of the monastic rules is not incurred.⁶⁴

The situation would be different if a qualified community of *bhikṣuṇīs* were present. In such a case, if a community of *bhikṣus* were to give ordination without involving the community of *bhikṣuṇīs*, those who gave the ordination would commit an offense (Tib. *ltung ba*, Skt. *āpatti*).⁶⁵ But in the absence of *bhikṣuṇīs*, *bhikṣus* are authorized or even have the duty to ordain women, if requested to do so, provided the necessary conditions on the side of the candidate are met.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ See Clarke (232–238).

⁶⁵ Ibid. (234–236).

⁶⁶ The *prātimokṣa* vow is considered by tradition to be one of the three kinds of *avijñāptirūpa* (non-revelatory form, i.e., a very subtle form of *rūpa*; see Dhammajoti (14f)). It is believed to cease with the body at death, provided it has neither been returned nor broken by committing a major defeat (Tib. *pham pa*, Skt. *pārājika*). This *avijñāptirūpa* is generated out of certain causes and conditions. In the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya context, it is important to note that the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (*Chos mngon pa'i mdzod kyi bshad pa*), D 4090, ku, 176b1, in relation to verse IV.14b-c, explains that in substance or in essence the vow of a *bhikṣuṇī* does not differ from that of a *bhikṣu*. It is only the name that changes according to gender: *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 also Bapat and Gokale (*Vinaya-Sūtra* xli and xliii).*

II.3 *The interim steps for higher ordination*

Besides the going forth and the higher ordination, several interim steps are required for completing the gradual ordination procedure for women in the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition. Thus the question arises as to whether, in the absence of a *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha*, the additional intermediate stages prescribed for women are required and, if so, whether they can also be given by *bhikṣus*.

For many centuries now, it has been common in the Tibetan tradition for *bhikṣus*, including H.H. the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, to give the *upāsikā* precepts, the going forth, and the *śrāmaṇerikā* precepts to women by employing the male manual for ordination (*pha chog*). This means that the same manual is used for giving *upāsaka* (*dge bsnyen*) precepts, the going forth, and the *śrāmaṇera* (*dge tshul*) precepts to women as is used in giving these precepts to men.

For the specific intermediate steps, however, the manual for females (*ma chog*) has to be applied, since the manual for males does not provide formulas for conferring the *śikṣamāṇā* precepts and the *brahmacāryopasthānasamvṛti*.

These intermediate steps are necessary in order to arrive at what tradition reckons to be “flawless and perfect *bhikṣuṇī* vows” (*dge slong ma’i sdom pa nyes med phun sum tshogs pa*).⁶⁷ These steps include the requirement that a female candidate receive the *śikṣamāṇā* precepts (to be observed for two years), and the *brahmacāryopasthānasamvṛti*, which is to be given on the day of higher ordination. Both are supposed to be conferred by a *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* alone.

⁶⁷ Tsering (“Lamp” 173) and Finnegan (“Flawless” 197).

As already pointed out by Samdhong Rinpoche during the Hamburg congress in 2007,

Bhikṣus may if necessary leave their summer retreat to confer *śikṣamāṇā* ordination, which is normally given by *bhikṣuṇīs* alone. This allowance implies that *bhikṣuṇīs* are not available to give such ordination themselves. Inferring from this . . . where no *bhikṣuṇīs* are available, the *brahmacarya* and *bhikṣuṇī* ordination ceremonies may also be performed by the *bhikṣu saṅgha* alone.⁶⁸

The relevant *Vinaya* passage can be found in the *Varṣavastu*, in the section concerning the rainy season retreat. This passage indicates that a *bhikṣu* can leave his rainy season retreat for up to seven days in the following cases:

1. A *śrāmaṇerikā* asks him to come in order to confer on her the training of a *śikṣamāṇā*,⁶⁹
2. A *śikṣamāṇā* who has completed the two years training period asks him to come in order to confer on her the higher ordination.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Mohr and Tsedroen (*Dignity* 256).

⁶⁹ The formulation employed indicates explicitly that the *bhikṣu* may leave in order to confer the training in the six principles and the six minor principles, D ('*dul ba*), *ka*, 244b5, H ('*dul ba*), *ka*, 342a4: *chos drug dang | rjes su mthun pa'i chos drug gi bslab pa stsal du gsol*, see also Dutt (143,5): *ṣaṭsu dharmeṣu ṣaṭsv anudharmeṣu śikṣām dāsyanti*, and T. 1445 at T. XXIII 1043b15: 願為我授六法, 六隨法. This makes it clear that the point at issue is the formal initiation into the probationary training, *pace* Heirman ("Becoming" 190).

⁷⁰ D ('*dul ba*), *ka*, 244b1, H ('*dul ba*), *ka*, 341b4; see Dutt (142,13).

The allowance that a *bhikṣu* may leave the rainy season retreat in order to give higher ordination to a *śikṣamāṇā* can be understood in two ways:

1. He might go to participate in an higher ordination performed together with a *bhikṣuṇī* community, or
2. He might go to participate in a higher ordination performed by a *bhikṣu* community alone.

That the higher ordination can be given by *bhikṣus* alone is only clear from the first *gurudharma*.

In at least two major Indian Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* commentaries, we find an allowance that not only permits a *bhikṣu* community to give the vow (*sdom pa*) of full ordination and the vow of a *śikṣamāṇā*, but also to give the *brahmacāryopasthānaṣṣṛti*. The latter is usually given by a *bhikṣuṇī* community alone on the day of higher ordination. According to Ācārya Dharmamitra's *Extended Commentary on the Vinayasūtra*:⁷¹

The meaning of “It is also [similar] for the *śikṣamāṇās* regarding the *brahmacārya upasthāna* vow and full ordination” is: If a *śikṣamāṇā* wishes to receive the *brahmacārya upasthāna* vow and also full ordination and the *śikṣamāṇā* is outside the boundary (*sīmā*) [of the *bhikṣus*], then to accomplish these two purposes for the benefit of the Dhar-

⁷¹ 'Dul ba'i mdo'i rgya cher 'grel pa (*Vinayasūtraṭīkā*), D 4120 ('dul ba), yu, 138b5: *dge slob ma'i tshangs par spyod pa la nye bar gnas pa'i sdom pa dang bsnyen par rdzogs par bya ba la yang ngo zhes bya ba ni | dge slob ma mtshams kyi phyi rol na gnas pa rnams kyis tshangs par spyod pa la nye bar gnas pa'i sdom pa mnod pa dang | bsnyen par rdzogs par bya ba chos dang ldan pa'i don de gnyis byung na de dag bsgrub pa'i don du yang dge slong dbyar gnas par khas blangs pa mtshams kyi nang na 'dug pas zhag bdun man chad mtshams kyi phyi rol du 'gro zhing de tshun chad kyis phyir 'khor bar byin gyis brlab bo zhes bya bar sbyar ro.*

ma—to bestow the *brahmacarya upasthāna* vow and to give full ordination—*bhikṣus*, even if they have accepted the rainy season [restrictions] and are inside the boundary, may leave the boundary for up to seven days after having done the requisite blessing, stating that they will return within this time.⁷²

This is a commentary on the following sentence in Guṇaprabha's *Vinayasūtra*:⁷³

It is also [similar] for the *śikṣamāṇās* regarding the *brahmacariyopasthānasamvṛti* and the higher ordination.

While these indications are not from the *Vinaya* itself, but from the commentaries, they carry comparable importance for members of the tradition, who consider the *Vinaya* commentaries as authoritative.⁷⁴

Conclusion

From what has been discussed above there is clear canonical evidence that, based on the first *gurudharma*, *bhikṣus* can give all stages of a woman's ordination, starting with the going forth and reaching all the way up to the higher ordination, if circumstances so require. If these steps are

⁷² This is the translation already given in Tsering (“Lamp” 177).

⁷³ Tengyur D 4117 (*'dul ba*), wu, 63a5: *dge slob ma'i tshangs par spyod pa la nye bar gnas pa'i sdom pa dang bsnyen par rdzogs par bya ba la yang ngo*.

⁷⁴ As Samdhong Rinpoche in Mohr and Tsedroen (*Dignity* 255) emphasizes, “Tibetans strictly follow the Indian commentaries on it by Guṇaprabha and Dharmamitra.” Finnegan (“Flawless” 199) explains that “the root *Vinaya* text . . . is no longer read by most Tibetan monks or scholars. Instead, *Vinaya* education and the regulation of monastic life are centered on Guṇaprabha's highly condensed interpretive digest and the vast commentarial tradition based on his work.”

performed by Tibetan Mūlsarvāstivāda *bhikṣus*, the *bhikṣuṇīs* would of course automatically become part of the Mūlsarvāstivāda lineage.

Abbreviations

AN	<i>Aṅguttara-nikāya</i>
B	Berlin edition
D	Derge edition
Dpe	Bka' 'gyur dpe bsdur ma edition
F	Phudrag edition
H	Lhasa edition
J	Jang Satham edition
K	K'ang hsi edition
L	London Shelkar edition
MĀ	<i>Madhyama-āgama</i> (T 26)
Mvy	<i>Mahāvvyutpatti</i>
N	Narhang edition
Q	Peking edition
R	Gyantse Tempangma edition
S	Stog
Skt.	Sanskrit
T.	Taishō edition (CBETA)

T	Tōyō bunko edition
Tib.	Tibetan
Vin	<i>Vinaya</i>
Z	Shey edition

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