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The Transformation of the Monastic Ordination (*pravrajyā*) Into a Rite of Passage in Newar Buddhism

The *upanayana* ritual is in many ways the most important Hindu rite of passage,¹ the *saṃskāra* par excellence. In this ritual the boy is introduced (*upa√nī*, hence *upanayana*) to the teacher by his father. He becomes his student and, as an outward sign of this, puts on the girdle (*mekhalā*). The teacher in turn introduces (*upanayana*) the boy to the Vedas, notably by teaching him the Gāyatrī Mantra, which is considered to be a condensation of the Vedas. The boy is thereby initiated into the divine realm of the Vedas and authorized and empowered to function as a ritual subject who may maintain the sacred house fire and carry out rituals as a *yajamāna*. As an outward sign of this, he is invested with the sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*). It is by virtue of this ritual that Hindu males become confirmed members of the caste into which they have been born. While *śūdras* are completely excluded, the performance of the ritual differs for *vaiśyas*, *kṣatriyas* and Brahmins by details such as the materials employed and the form in which the Gāyatrī Mantra is imparted. In this way the initiates come to be endowed with the qualities of their respective *varṇa*, which they acquire by their natural birth only in latent form. The transformation effected by the *upanayana* is so decisive that the tradition views it as a second birth—a birth that constitutes a being in a more fundamental sense than the first (biological) one does.²

Given the *upanayana*'s supreme social importance, it comes as no surprise that the non-Brahmanical traditions in India, which were never completely segregated, felt compelled to offer their lay adherents an equivalent rite, rather than leave them on the quasi-prenatal stage of uninitiated raw manhood. Thus the Digambaras of South India adapted the *upanayana* ritual and other *saṃskāras* to

1 For convenience sake, I restrict the term "rite of passage" in this paper to life-cycle rituals that are undergone as a matter of course rather than as a matter of choice. According to this usage, the *bare chuyegu* ordination is a rite of passage, whereas this does not apply to an ordination that is not taken routinely by members of a certain social group at a particular stage in their life, but rather out of inclination or some other reason.

2 For a discussion of this aspect of the *upanayana* ritual see Smith 1998: 93f.

a Jain ritual framework.³ For the Buddhist tradition in India, I am not aware of sources that would shed direct light on this issue. However, in Nepal Mahāyāna Buddhism survives in its original South Asian setting, and it is instructive to examine how the Buddhist tradition here transformed the monastic ordination into a rite of passage that is not only modelled on the *upanayana*, but also integrates and surpasses it.

This transformed rite of ordination is called *bare chuyegu* in Newari, an expression that renders *pravrajyā* and literally means “becoming a *bare*”, a word derived from *vandya* “venerable” and used for “monk”. In this rite the boys—in Kathmandu the *bare chuyegu* is usually performed for a group rather than singly—undergo the *pravrajyā* ceremony, become monks⁴ for three days,⁵ and then disrobe in order to remain householder Buddhists for the rest of their lives. In the process the boys become full-fledged members of the monastic community of their father. Without patrilineal descent one cannot be initiated into such a monastic community. There are some one hundred functioning communities of this kind left in the Kathmandu Valley (see Locke 1985, p. 514). Each community is regarded as a separate *saṃgha* that has its own *vihāra* (New.: *bāhāḥ* or *bahīḥ*), to which occasionally one or several branch *vihāra(s)* (New.: *kacā bāhāḥ*) are attached.⁶ All male members of such monastic communities are householders who have undergone the *bare chuyegu* ritual, and who usually marry and beget sons who will subsequently also be initiated into the same community.⁷

3 See, for instance, Dundas 1992: 162.

4 Since there is no higher ordination than the *bare chuyegu* in the Newar tradition (see below), I use the term “monk” even though from a Vinaya perspective the boys only become novices (*śrāmaṇera*).

5 By Newar reckoning they are monks for four days because the first day of ordination and the last day of disrobing are counted as full days.

6 The *vihāra* in Newar Buddhism is a monastery laid out in traditional Buddhist style according to a quadrangular plan with an open courtyard in the middle. Though it does not accommodate resident monks (of whom there have been none in Newar Buddhism for several centuries), it functions as the focus of the attached *saṃgha*, housing its deities and shrine rooms and providing space for rituals and other cultic activities. The differentiation between *bāhāḥ* and *bahīḥ* in Newari follows from the two different monastic traditions these two types of *vihāras* represent. While *bāhāḥs* have an explicit Tantric agenda, *bahīḥs* are institutions where, by contrast, the principle of celibate monkhood was emphasised, and accordingly also upheld for much longer than in the *bāhāḥ* tradition (cf. below n. 37). For further details see Gellner 1987: 365–414.

7 Note that irrespective of caste, all individuals but the sons of members are excluded from a given *saṃgha* (and hence have no access to the main exoteric shrine housing the principal Buddha image, the *kvāpāḥḍyaḥ*; see plate 9). Thus, the exclusiveness of the monastic

The *bare chuyegu* ordains the candidates into the *saṃgha* of the monastery to which they belong by patrilineal descent. It thereby transforms them into Buddhist specialists who continue to be distinguished from common laymen by their full membership in a monastic *saṃgha* even after they have disrobed. Hence, the *bare chuyegu* differs fundamentally from the temporary ordination in Southeast Asian Theravāda countries.⁸ The temporary ordination there also functions as a rite of passage that is undergone before marriage, with particular emphasis placed on the merit (*puṇya*) generated by the ordination for the parents. However, it is in principle accessible to all male candidates regardless of social background and does not confer permanently an elevated status in the way the *bare chuyegu* ritual does.⁹ Rather, after disrobing, the Southeast Asian initiates again become unequivocally laymen, in contrast to those monks who do not disrobe but renounce lay life as a life-long commitment. The lack of such vocational monks in Newar Buddhism, by contrast, means that there the disrobed initiates can continue to lay claim to a special status that elevates them above the common laymen who are barred from temporary ordination and access to a *saṃgha*.¹⁰

communities in Newar Buddhism is not intrinsically tied up with notions of caste. Rather it was only in a further, separate step that all members of monastic communities came to form an endogamous caste group so that the *bare chuyegu* consequently also assumed the function of an initiation into caste (see below).

8 See, e.g., Spiro 1982: 234–247, and Swearer 1995: 46–52.

9 This principal difference also shows in recent efforts to popularize Newar Vajrayāna Buddhism (as a response to the challenge posed by Buddhist modernism and the proselytizing Theravāda movement) by making the *bare chuyegu* ritual as an initiation into Mahāyāna Buddhism with a Tantric orientation accessible to all, irrespective of caste. Rather than performing the *bare chuyegu* as a simple temporary ordination for those boys without inherited ties to a monastic community, the need was felt to set up a new monastery of sorts, so that the boys be initiated into the *saṃgha* of a monastery. For this the Jinasaṃghavihāra above Vairocana Tīrtha, halfway between Kathmandu and Svayambhū was founded in 1997 (for details see the commemoration volume *Pravrajyā-saṃvara (bhikṣu-luṇe)*. *Lumaṅkā - 2* published by Phaṅḍiratna Vajrācārya). However, the *saṃgha* of the monastery is largely a theoretical construct devoid of social significance. Accordingly, the initiated boys do not obtain the status of Buddhist specialists in the way the hereditary *bares* do by virtue of their initiation into a functioning monastic community. It is indicative of the difference between the newly created *saṃgha* and the *saṃghas* of the historical *bāhās* that access to the *kvāpāḥḍyaḥ* shrine room of the Jinasaṃghavihāra is not—as in traditional Newar monasteries (see n. 7)—restricted to members of this *vihāra*'s *saṃgha*.

10 I am not aware of a detailed historical study of the custom of temporary ordination. Max Weber (1921: 261f.) must be one of the first to comment on this custom. Following Bühler's translation of the phrase *sagha upete* in the minor rock inscription 1 of Rupnath, Max Weber holds that Aśoka was ordained into the *saṃgha* without abdicating. Though Weber presumes that Aśoka did not disrobe subsequently (instead, so Weber, he was ex-

In a syncretic setting with strong Hindu overtones, the *bare chuyegu* ritual is of pivotal importance for the Buddhist sense of identity, not only for the initiates but also for the Buddhist community at large. Because of this importance, and because of its exoteric character, the *bare chuyegu* is the most studied of all Newar Buddhist rituals. Starting with Brian Hodgson in 1841, it has been described numerous times, most recently by Siegfried Lienhard (1999, chapter 6). The most sophisticated study is by David Gellner (1988). He supplemented his fieldwork account of the ritual by translating a widely used Newari handbook (namely the *Cūḍākarma Vidhāna*, published in 1993 by Padmaśrī Vajra Vajrācārya) and by referring to the *pravrajyā* section in the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā*, a vast compendium of diverse rites (probably composed by Kuladatta in Nepal sometime in the second half of 11th century)¹¹ upon which much of the ritual tradition of Newar Buddhism is based. All the studies of the *bare chuyegu* have treated it as a coherent whole (which of course it is), focusing on the Buddhist script in the foreground of the ritual and on its social implications. Little attention has been paid, however, to the genesis of the *bare chuyegu* rite, to the various levels on which it operates, and—most importantly—to its relationship to the Brahmanical tradition.

Such an analysis of the *bare chuyegu* rite (which is attempted in the present paper)¹² is not only of interest for our understanding of the workings of the

empted from keeping the full vows of monkhood), he speculates that Aśoka's ordination functioned as a model for the custom of temporary monkhood that developed in imitation in Theravāda countries. Besides the problematic rendering of *sagha upete* (which should rather mean "I have visited the *saṃgha*" as Hultsch and others have it), it is difficult to see how the concept of a semi-monastic king could have functioned as a model for the temporary ordination taken up as a rite de passage by men of all strata of society.

11 There are a number of dated manuscripts of the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā* from the early 13th century as well as its Tibetan translation from the end of the 13th century. On the basis of arguments that are too complex to be repeated here, Tanaka & Yoshizaki (1998: 128) arrive at the conclusion that Kuladatta flourished between 1045 and 1089.

12 I here do not offer yet another description of the *bare chuyegu* ritual—for this I refer the reader to the aforementioned accounts, notably by Lienhard and Gellner. However, I do recount the main steps in the course of my analysis and partly illustrate them with photos. Let it be added that none of the studies deals in detail with the Tantric ritual framework and the fire ritual. Nor do they register all preparatory and concluding rites that are performed on the days before and after the *bare chuyegu* ritual. Details of these ancillary rites differ from monastery to monastery, something a comprehensive study would need to take into account. I had the opportunity to observe the *bare chuyegu* on two separate occasions in monasteries in Kathmandu, namely in February 1998 in Bikamā Bāhāḥ and at the end of February and the beginning of March 2001 in Mu Bāhāl. I am very grateful to the members of both *bāhāhs* for generously allowing me to watch and also photograph and

Newar Buddhist tradition in a Hindu dominated setting, but may also—in a more general vein—shed light on the mechanisms of change and continuity and the dynamics of rituals in South Asia. Let it be added that Newar Buddhism not only provided for the need of an initiation for boys corresponding to the *upanayana* but adapted the whole cycle of Brahmanical rites of passage, including the *śrāddha* ceremonies for the deceased, into its framework. This process of adaptation and the ensuing issue of change and continuity have as yet not been examined in detail, and the present paper can be but a small contribution towards such a larger study.

As mentioned, *bare chuyegu* means literally “becoming a monk” and hence is nothing but the Newari term rendering *pravrajyā*. The starting point of the *bare chuyegu* rite is more precisely the *pravrajyā* rite as attested in the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins and transmitted in the *Bhikṣukarmavākya* discovered in Gilgit¹³ and—in a more extended version—in the translation of the *Vinayavastu* in the Kanjur (sDe-dge no. 1, ’dul-ba, ka 47b7–63b7)¹⁴ and in two independent Vinaya works of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, namely the *Upasampadājñāpti* (preserved in the Sanskrit original and published by B. Jinananda) and the **Ekaśatakarman*, translated into Chinese (Taishō 1453) as part of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya (cf. Tanemura 1994).¹⁵ With the intention of taking *pravrajyā*, the Mūlasarvāstivādin candidate first goes for refuge to the Buddha, *dharma* and *saṃgha*, vows to keep the five main rules (*śikṣāpada*) and thus becomes explicitly a lay follower, an *upāsaka*. In a second step of what is clearly one ritual sequence, he seeks the *saṃgha*’s permission to “go forth,” asks for a preceptor and then has his hair shaved, takes a bath and in exchange for his lay outfit dons the monk’s robes and implements, handed over by the officiating *upādhyāya*. After having

film their sacred rituals. It was only by seeing how the rituals are performed that I could abstract from the script in the foreground (as fixed in the ritual handbooks and described in the secondary literature) and become aware of the various levels on, and the different ways in which, the ritual operates in practice.

- 13 The Sanskrit text was first published by Banerjee (1949). Härtel (1956) has cited this text at length in his study of the *Karmavācanā*, drawing also upon the Tibetan version and the *Bhikṣuṇī-Karmavācanā*, published first by Ridging & de la Vallée Poussin (1917–20) and later in revised form by Schmidt (1993) on the basis of a Nepalese manuscript. Von Hinüber’s publication (1970) of parts of the Gilgit *Karmavācanā* sets in after the *pravrajyā* section.
- 14 It follows from Wille’s (1990: 27f) summary of the preserved fragments of the *Vinayavastvāgama* found in Gilgit that the section in question has been lost. As for the Tibetan translation, cf. the summary of the *Pravrajyāvastu* in Banerjee 1979: 100–186.
- 15 Härtel (1956: 68–72) also adduces two fragments from the Turfan finds (numbered 17 and 18), which reproduce part of the *pravrajyā* ritual, apparently in a shortened version.

received a monastic name, he again goes for refuge to the Three Jewels and then pledges the ten vows of monkhood. He has now become a *śrāmaṇera*, that is, a novice. In order to become a full monk (*bhikṣu*) he also needs to take the *upasampadā* ordination. As part of this ceremony, the *pravrajyā* rite outlined above is repeated, even though the candidate has undergone this rite already before, when becoming a novice.

The aforementioned *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā* by Kuladatta follows this tradition of taking *pravrajyā*. More precisely, it is closely based on the more elaborate version of the *pravrajyā* ceremony transmitted in the Tibetan translation of the *Vinayavastu* (and in the above-mentioned *Upasampadājñāpti* and **Ekaśatakarman*), and includes—partly as quotes—passages from this version that are missing in the *Bhikṣukarmavākya* from Gilgit. Thus the quote from the *Vinaya* (*tad uktaṃ vinaye*) that introduces the *pravrajyā* section in the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā*,¹⁶ forms part of the version translated into Tibetan,¹⁷ but is not found in the *Bhikṣukarmavākya*. More importantly, in contrast to the Gilgit recension, the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā* prescribes—in accordance with the instruction by the Buddha transmitted in Tibetan translation¹⁸ as well as in the *Upasampadājñāpti*¹⁹ and the **Ekaśatakarman*²⁰—that the hair¹⁹ is to be cut in two stages.²¹

16 *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā* 249,4f (I have changed the punctuation of the Śata Piṭaka edition and emended the text slightly in accordance with Tanemura 1997: 44f.): *idānīm pravrajyāgrahaṇam ucyate. tad uktaṃ vinaye ācāryopādhyāyaiḥ pravrajyavitavyaṃ <m upa>saṃpādāyitavyaṃ iti. bhikṣavo na jānanti kathaṃ pravrajyavitavyaṃ katham upasampādāyitavyaṃ iti. bhagavān āha. yasya kasyacit pravrajyāpekṣa upasaṃkrāmati sa tenāsau antarāyikān dharmān prṣṭvā ādau trīṣaṇagamanāni pañcaśikṣāpadāny upāsakasamvaraś ca dātavyaḥ.*

17 *Vinayavastu*, Sde-dge no. 1, vol. ka 49a1–3 (= Peking no. 1030, khe 51a6–b1; cf. Eimer 1983, vol. 2: 128f): *bcom ldan 'das kyis mkhan po dang slob dpon dag gis rab tu dbyung bar bya zhing bsnyen par rdzogs par bya'o zhes bka' stsal nas | dge slong nams kyis ji ltar rab tu dbyung bar bya ba dang | ji ltar bsnyen par rdzogs par bya ba mi shes nas bcom ldan 'das kyis bka' stsal pa | 'ga' zhig gi gan du rab tu 'byung bar 'dod pa 'ongs na des de la bar chad kyi chos nams dris nas gzung bar bya'o || bzung nas gsum la skyabs su 'gro ba dang | dge bsnyen nyid du khas blangs pas dge bsnyen gyi sdom pa sbyin par bya'o ||*

18 *Ibid.*, vol. ka 50a6–b1 (= Peking no. 1030, khe 52b5–7; cf. Eimer 1983, vol. 2: 132): *de'i 'og tu gang gis de'i skra dang kha spu dag 'breg par byed pa'i dge slong la bcol bar bya'o || des thams cad 'breg par byed nas | bcom ldan 'das kyis bka' stsal pa | thams cad breg par mi bya bar 'di ltar gtsug phud gzhang par bya zhing de'i 'og tu ci gtsug phud breg gam zhes dri bar bya'o || gal te mi breg go zhes zer na 'o na song shig ces brjod par bya'o || gal te bregs shig ces zer na breg par bya'o ||*

19 *Upasampadājñāpti* 9, 5–8: *tataḥ paścāt keśā avatārayitavyāḥ | keśān cāvātārayati | bhagavān āha śikhā sthāpayitavyo (sic.) | tataḥ paścāt prṣṭavyaḥ | avatārayatāṃ ca śikhā | yadi*

First, all hair but a tuft (*cūḍā*) is to be cut. Then the candidate is reminded that he now is equal to a householder and asked if he really wants to go forth (*pravrajyā*). After he has confirmed this, the tuft, too, is cut off.²² That the hair is cut in two stages reflects the procedure of the *upanayana* where at the outset the candidate also has his head shaved except for the *cūḍā*.²³ Moreover, it is possible that—in accordance with the *upanayana*—the *cūḍā* was ritually fashioned in terms of the Brahmanical *cūḍākarma* rite, as is indeed the case in the Newar *bare chuyegu* (see below).²⁴ The procedure may also have been adopted as a dramatic device to highlight the rupture with Brahmanical Hinduism. For the decisive act of cutting hair that segregates the Buddhist initiate from Brahmanical society and turns him into a novice is only the tonsure of the *cūḍā*.²⁵

kathayati neti vaktavyaḥ ata eva gaccha [] kathayaty eva tām (sic.) abhyavatārayitavyā |
 Cf. the corresponding passage in the *Bhikṣuṇīkarmavācanā* (folio 10b/11a, cited according to Schmidt 1993: 250, 16–19): *tata upādhyāyikayā keśāvatārikā bhikṣuṇī adheṣṭavyā yā keśān avatārayati | tayā keśān avatārantyā praṣṭavyā bhagini kiṃ keśā avatāryantām iti. yadi kathayaty eva avatāryantām ity avatārayi<ta>vyā | atha ka<tha>yati neti vaktavyā ata eva gaccheti |*

20 *Taishō* 1453, 456b7–9.

21 This procedure is also prescribed in the *Śrāmaṇeratvopāyavidhi* of Guṇaprabha's *Vinayasūtra*, a text presumably dating to the first half of the seventh century (cf. Nietupski 1993: 235–7), in *sūtras* 13–14: *keśāśmaśrūn ava[tārayet ācūdam] || avatāryantām cūdeti prṣṭenānujñāte, tām ||* (quoted from Bapat & Gokhale 1982: 7). At the end of the sentence *avatārayet* or something to the same effect has to be supplied.

22 *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā* 250,5f (I have again changed the punctuation of the Śata Pīṭaka edition and emended the text slightly in accordance with Tanemura 1997: 44f.): *tataḥ keśān avatārya cūḍā sthāpayitavyā. tataḥ praṣṭavyaḥ | adyāpi tvaṃ ḡṛhinā samāna eva, kiṃ pravrajyāyāṃ niścaya iti. yadi bravīti niścaya iti tadāvatārya catuḥsamudrajalaih snāpayitvā kāśyavastrair āchhādyā [...].*

23 Note that the same procedure of cutting the hair in two stages is attested for the *saṃnyāsa* ritual in Nepal (see Bouillier 1985: 206f). Here, too, the candidate first has all his hair but the *cūḍā* shaved, and then has the *cūḍā* cut off at a later stage in the ritual in order to mark his renunciation of worldly life. This raises the possibility that the Buddhist *pravrajyā* ceremony is modelled at this point on the *saṃnyāsa* ritual. However, even in this case the underlying model would still be the *upanayana*, because the *saṃnyāsa* ritual clearly has to be understood against the background of this archetypal Brahmanical rite of initiation.

24 It is even conceivable that the candidate was understood to have undergone the *cūḍākarma* ritual at an earlier stage of his life as a rite de passage in accordance with the Brahmanical tradition where the *cūḍākarma* ritual is ideally only repeated at the *upanayana* and not performed for the first time.

25 But note that in the course of what Olivelle (1995: 12, 25f.) calls the “domestication of asceticism” it became controversial among Brahmanical ascetics whether the top-knot is to be cut off or not. While Advaita ascetics remove the *cūḍā*, Vaiṣṇava ascetics generally do not (*ibid.*: 11).

The explanation found in the Chinese translation of the **Ekaśatakarman* (ibid.) points in the same direction. There the Buddha stipulates the rule to cut the hair in two stages in order to allow a wavering candidate, who might regret his decision to go forth to monkhood once his hair is shaved, to back off in the last moment. Similarly, the *Vinayavastuṭīkā* preserved in the Tanjur (Sde-dge 4113) explains that this procedure is to ascertain whether the candidate is really absolutely sure that he wants to go forth to monkhood (tsu 242a5–6). At any rate, the procedure to cut the hair in two steps attests to the—direct or indirect—influence exerted by Brahmanical *saṃskāra*s upon Buddhist ordination rituals at a time early enough for it to find entry into a canonical recension of the Vinaya, namely the aforementioned Mūlasarvāstivāda version preserved in Tibetan translation.

The *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā* goes beyond the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, as attested in the above-mentioned works, by introducing Tantric elements, such as worship by means of *maṇḍalas* and the sanctifying *abhiṣeka* with the waters from the four oceans (*catursamudrajala*), which replaces the bath after the tonsure. These changes strengthen the initiatory character of the *pravrajyā* ritual.²⁶ More importantly, already in the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā* there are indications that the *pravrajyā* ritual had been adapted to a specific social context. To start with, it is significant that the *pravrajyāvidhi* is embedded in a ritual compendium otherwise not concerned with *vinaya* issues, i.e. the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā*. To my mind this indicates that, in the monastic milieu for which the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā* was written, the traditional *vinaya* was of little, if any, consequence, that is, with the exception of the ordination ceremony, which therefore was incorporated into the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā*.²⁷ This would accord with the situation in contemporary Newar Buddhism where monasteries do not

26 I follow Eliade (1995: 53f.), who has argued that the common Buddhist ordination shows important structural parallels with the Hindu *upanayana* (see below) and hence is not a purely legal act, as Dickson (1875) maintained. Therefore, I do not regard the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā*'s addition of rites that confer special qualities upon the candidate as a radical transformation of the Buddhist ordination, but rather as a subtle shift of emphasis. This shift is taken to its extreme in the *bare chuyegu* ritual where the legal aspect of the ordination fades into the background (though without getting lost entirely), and where the rite becomes principally an initiation into the sacred realm of Buddhism.

27 Of course, it could be argued that Kuladatta incorporated the *pravrajyāvidhi* because the foundation of a new monastery, the principal concern of the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā*, included the establishment of a new *saṃgha* and, as part of this, the ordination. This in turn, however, would raise the question why new monasteries were typically founded for newly ordained members. In search of an answer one could posit a situation as in Newar Buddhism, where without inherited ties the only access to membership in a monastic community is the establishment of a new *saṃgha* and with it the foundation of a new monastery.

use (and possibly not even own) Vinaya texts, but rather rely for the ordination ceremony (either directly or via secondary ritual handbooks) exclusively on the *pravrajyāvidhi* transmitted in the *Kriyāsaṃgrahaṇīkā*. It is also noteworthy that the *upasampadā* ordination does not feature in the *Kriyāsaṃgrahaṇīkā*, though it is mentioned as a separate act in the quotation from the Vinaya (adduced above in n. 16). This accords with the situation in Newar Buddhism where the *upasampadā* is not performed, and where in its place the *pravrajyā* functions as an ordination that transforms the initiates into full-fledged members of the *saṃgha*, whose seniority is normally computed by the date of their *bare chuyegu* and who are even referred to as *bhikṣus* (see below).²⁸ Note also that at the end of the *pravrajyā* rite in the *Kriyāsaṃgrahaṇīkā* (251,6–255,1) the candidate receives upon his request, addressed individually to the *ācārya*, the *upādhyāya* and the *saṃgha*, the permission to use the monk's robes, alms bowl, water pot and staff (Sanskrit: *khikkhirikā*, Newari: *sisalākū*) within the *saṃgha*, when going to the royal palace and when moving about in public. To my knowledge this authorization does not form part of the *pravrajyā* section in the canonical Vinayas. Rather, it corresponds to the conferral of robes and alms bowl in the *upasampadā* ritual.²⁹ This, too, suggests that the *pravrajyā* initiate has become a fully qualified member of the *saṃgha*, rather than a mere novice, just as is the case in contemporary Newar Buddhism. What is more, the *Kriyāsaṃgrahaṇīkā* attests also in other contexts to a setting at odds with standard Buddhist monasticism. Thus it instructs the donor of a new monastery (referred to as *upāsaka* and *yajamāna*) at the beginning of his project and later at the time of the monastery's consecration to seek out the *ācārya* (or *ācāryas*) needed for the rituals at his (or their) house (*grha*).³⁰ This suggests that the masters in charge of such a pivotal undertaking as the foundation of a monastery would typically be individuals living at home rather than in a monastic institution.³¹

28 Compare the original situation in Buddhism when there was no differentiation between a provisional and full ordination, and monks were received into the *saṃgha* by the mere command "come monk!" (*ehi bhikkhu*). See Kloppenburg 1983 and Kiefer-Pülz 2000: 371f.

29 Thus, the instruction *pātracīvaraṃ paryeṣitavyaṃ* ("bowl and robes are to be requested") in *Kriyāsaṃgrahaṇīkā* 252,5 serving as an introduction to the elaborate supplication for the permission to officially use robes, alms bowl, water pot and staff can be found in precisely the same wording at the beginning of the *upasampadā* ritual as transmitted in *Upasampadājñapti* 11,2.

30 *Kriyāsaṃgrahaṇīkā* 3,4f and 193,4f. Cp. Tanemura 2001: 72 n. 27.

31 Cp. also Darpañācārya's instruction in his *Kriyāsamuccaya* that monks (*bhikṣu*) should give up their robes (*kāśyāparityāga*) before receiving Tantric empowerment (see Tanemura 2001: 72f. n. 29).

I want to digress briefly here and elaborate upon the possible implications of the aforesaid matter. The above-mentioned points suggest that Newar Buddhism with its characteristic institution of married householders who form a *saṃgha* as quasi-monks attached to a monastery should not be viewed as a purely local Nepalese development that could only happen after Buddhism had vanished from the Indian mainland. Rather, this institution seems to be reflected already in the *Kriyāsaṃgrahaṇjikā*, a text which originated presumably more than two centuries before Buddhism vanished in the Indian mainland (see above). Given the well-attested links between Buddhists in Nepal and India at this time, it is unlikely that the form of Buddhism that then existed in Nepal was vastly different from that in India. Thus, even though the *Kriyāsaṃgrahaṇjikā* presumably originated in Nepal, it is most probably not at complete odds with the Buddhism prevalent at that time in Northern India. This means that many of the so-called “Hindu” features commonly attributed to the supposed degeneration of Buddhism in a Newar setting after the demise of Buddhism in India may be of greater antiquity and have their origins in the assimilation of Indian Buddhism to its Hindu surroundings already in Northern India.³²

There is evidence of different provenance that also points in this direction and needs to be evaluated systematically for a better understanding of the social history of Buddhism. It is important to differentiate between instances where particular individuals have violated the otherwise upheld monastic norm, instances where a pattern of systematic deviation emerges, and instances where deviations from the traditional monastic norm have themselves become, or at least started to become, the norm, as happened in the *bāhāḥ* tradition of Newar Buddhism.³³ To name but one example from outside Nepal,³⁴ the *Rājatarāṅginī*,

32 Cp. Max Weber's speculation (1921: 287) that the Newar system of Buddhist priesthood has its origin in Indian developments: “So dürfte sich auch in Indien ziemlich bald eine verheiratete, die Kloster-Pfründen erblich appropriierende buddhistische Weltpriesterschaft entwickelt haben. Wenigstens zeigt Nepal und das nordindische Randgebiet deutlich diese Entwicklung noch heute”.

33 This is not the place to go into the factors and precise circumstances and mechanisms that may have given rise to such a deviant tradition. Among the avenues of enquiry to be pursued in this context is a comparison with the erosion of celibate monkhood in other Mahāyāna cultures. For instance, the figure of the married Tantric practitioner (*sngags pa*) in the rNying ma pa and other Tibetan traditions may be of help in assessing the impact that esoteric forms of Tantric practices with their emphasis on a female partner had on celibate monkhood in India and Nepal. Similarly, the example of other Buddhist societies may shed light on the role played by monks' private ownership of monasteries and the principle of passing monastic property on within one's family.

the celebrated chronicle written by Kalhaṇa in the middle of the 12th century, attests to the phenomenon of married “monks” in Kashmir. It records the endowment of a monastery by king Meghavāhana’s wife Yūkadevī,³⁵ which had one half set aside for practising *bhikṣus* (*bhikṣavaḥ śikṣācārāḥ*) and one for householder ones (*gārhasthya*) “together with their wives, children, cattle and property” (*sastrīputrapaśuśrī*).³⁶ The endowment of half a monastery for householder “monks” shows that we are not dealing with a mere violation of the norm, but with a different pattern of Buddhist monasticism that had become a tradition in its own right, coexisting alongside celibate monasticism. This coexistence of a celibate and non-celibate monastic tradition accords with the situation in medieval Newar Buddhism where in the aforementioned *bahīs*, i.e. *vihāras* with less of a Tantric agenda, the tradition of celibate monkhood was retained until the Malla period,³⁷ existing alongside the *bāhāḥs* with their tradition of married

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- 34 Further examples can be found in von Hinüber’s recent review (2001) of Lienhard 1999. Referring to his essay on “Old Age and Old Monks in Pāli Buddhism” (1997) he makes note of “a certain *samaṇa-kuṭumbika*” (attested in Buddhaghosa’s commentary on the *Samyuttanikāya: Sāratthappakāsinī* III 33,15) as an “ascetic who is at the same time a landlord” (von Hinüber 1997: 74), making “a living as a farmer together with fellow-monks, however without leaving the order” (von Hinüber 2001: 356). In the same review, von Hinüber also draws attention to the dealings of monks, attested in the so-called Niya documents (which stem from the ancient Silk Road kingdom of Shanshan and dated to the 3rd and 4th centuries C.E.), as further evidence that would suggest a “fairly early date” for “the beginnings of this aberration from true monkhood” (i.e. as found in Newar Buddhism). In his paper “Buddhism in the Niya Documents” read at the Third Silk Road Conference at Yak in 1998, S. Insler has presented more concrete material from these documents that demonstrates the engagement of monks in standard family life. Let it be added that I am ill at ease with von Hinüber’s choice of words in the present context. Once a deviating pattern of monasticism has become a tradition in its own right (as happened in Newar Buddhism), I prefer to regard it as an alternative model of Buddhist monasticism, rather than as a mere “aberration from true monkhood”.
- 35 Though the precise dates of king Meghavāhana are uncertain, there can be little doubt that he reigned before the 7th century C.E. While we cannot take the *Rājatarāṅginī*’s records at face value, the report of the monastery’s donation shows at the very least that the custom of “householder monks” was well-established by the 12th century when Kalhaṇa composed his chronicle.
- 36 *Rājatarāṅginī* 3.11–12: *cakre naḍavane rājño yūkadevyabhidhā vadhūḥ | vihāram adbhutākāraṃ sapatnīspardhayodyatā || ardhe yad bhikṣavaḥ śikṣācārās tatrārpitās tayā | ardhe gārhasthyagarhyās ca sastrīputrapaśuśriyaḥ ||*
- 37 Lienhard (1996: 250–252) suggests that the tradition of celibate monkhood in the *bahīs* became gradually assimilated to the householder model of *bāhāḥ* Buddhism sometime in the 14th to 17th century. He also claims—regrettably without revealing his source—that in

quasi-monks. Incidentally, the fact that the *bāhāḥ* monastic tradition did not outright replace the tradition of celibate monkhood but operated side by side with it lends weight to my argument that the tradition of *bāhāḥ* Buddhism cannot be explained simply in terms of degeneration.

There is, however, no direct and unequivocal indication that the *pravrajyā* was already in the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā* conceived of as a temporary ordination.³⁸ By contrast, it is noteworthy that although the rite of disrobing (called *cīvar totēyā vidhi* in Newari) forms an integral part of *bare chuyegu* handbooks, Kuladatta does not deal with it. I also do not know of other sources that would clearly attest to the practice of temporary ordination before the Malla era. From that era, by contrast, there are ritual handbooks³⁹ and other sources⁴⁰ that testify

the 17th century there were still some 25 monasteries in Patan with celibate monks (1984: 110).

- 38 Tanemura recently suggested that “the Brahminical life-cycle rites known as the ten rites had already been taken over by the Buddhist community in the Kathmandu valley in Kuladatta’s time, and disciples had to go through the ten rites before they were empowered to be *vajrācāryas*” (Tanemura 2001: 64). He apparently deduces this from the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā*’s teaching that the consecration of sacred objects includes the performance of the ten rites of passage. However, the ten rites prescribed in the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā* are not identical with those performed typically by Newar Buddhists of the monastic milieu. While these Newars pass through the *bare chuyegu* rite treated in this paper, the sacred objects undergo the *upanayana*, *vrātādeśa* and *samāvartana* rite. Thus the prescription of the “ten rites” in the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā* is not closely modelled on the life-cycles of Newar Buddhists. It has to be conceded, however, that in the Vajrācārya tradition of Patan (but not of Kathmandu) the consecration rites for sacred objects may—at least nowadays—also include the ritualization of the *bare chuyegu*. Despite this particular Patan tradition, I deem it more likely—this needs confirmation through detailed research—that the *saṃskāras* for sacred objects have originally been adopted from the Newar Hindu tradition where basically the same set of ten rites of passage forms an intrinsic part of consecration rituals. This, of course does, not preclude that by the time of Kuladatta the Brahminical rites of passage had—in an adapted version—already become prevalent among Buddhist Newars. Finally, note that at least nowadays in Kathmandu the *ācāryābhīṣeka* is routinely imparted before (and not after, as Tanemura has it) the tenth life-cycle rite, i.e. the wedding, has been undergone.
- 39 See, for instance, the two manuscripts microfilmed by the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP) with the reel numbers E 1488/3 (dating to 1681/82) and E 1455/3 (dating to 1736/7). I have not systematically searched for earlier handbooks from the Malla period testifying to the transformation of the *bare chuyegu* into temporary ordination.
- 40 The earliest such proof known to me is a note in a palm leaf manuscript from 1440/41 C.E., published by Sakya & Vaidya (1970: 50). See also the summary in Locke (1985: 489 n. 50). The note (referring to *Oṃ Bāhāḥ*, Patan) specifies some rules concerning the performance of the *bare chuyegu*, which accord with contemporary practice. More perti-

that the *bare chuyegu* ritual was then performed in basically the same way as it is even today, with the disrobing as an integral part of the ritual. Rather than pursuing the difficult (and important) question of when precisely the *pravrajyā* ritual came to be transformed into a rite of passage, I want to examine in the following how this transformation was effected against the backdrop of the Hindu *upanayana* ritual.

As mentioned above, the standard Buddhist ordination as such already has some important structural similarities to the *upanayana*. It, too, introduces the boy to a preceptor and transforms him into a religious student. Moreover, in a more basic sense it, too, introduces the boy to the sacred sphere of his religion and effects his passage to this realm. Accordingly, also in the Buddhist context, this is viewed as a fundamental transformation that resembles a second birth (Eliade 1995: 53f.). Thus the Buddhist monk becomes a “son of the Buddha,” and seniority is computed by referring to the ordination rather than to the natural birth. Furthermore, the *pravrajyā*, too, transforms the candidate into a member, albeit only a probationary one, of a new religious community.

The *bare chuyegu* that developed in the Newar tradition takes these structural parallels with the *upanayana* much further. Most importantly, by transforming the ordination into (ideally) permanent monkhood into a temporary ordination that is followed as a matter of course after a few days by disrobing, it clearly duplicates the structure of the *upanayana* as an initiation into a temporary period of *brahmacarya* that is concluded by the subsequent return back home from the teacher’s abode, the *samāvartana*. More precisely, the ritualization of monkhood with its reduction to four days imitates that Brahmanical model (itself the product of complex changes) in which the stage of *brahmacarya* and the subsequent return are merely ritually enacted. Nowadays in Nepal and large parts of India the *samāvartana* is generally performed even on the same day as the *upanayana*, but Kane, in his *History of Dharmasāstra* (vol. II, 1, p. 415), also makes reference to a four day period, i.e. a length of time that agrees with the schedule of the *bare chuyegu* ritual. It is in accordance with this structural assimilation that the *bare chuyegu* came to have much the same social consequences as the *upanayana*. It, too, transforms the initiate into a full-fledged member of his community entitled (and obliged) to function as ritual subject, and by the same token into a confirmed member of his caste who is eligible to marry accordingly.

nently, it stipulates that the sons of *saṃgha* members who are married to women of lower caste are not entitled to undergo the *bare chuyegu*. This stipulation accords with present-day practice and reveals that already then the *bare chuyegu* initiates went on to disrobe in order to marry and become procreating householders.

Similarly, once a boy has undergone the *bare chuyegu* ritual, it becomes the duty of his relatives to observe the full period of mourning and ritual impurity should the boy die. Conversely, by virtue of his *bare chuyegu* an eldest son, becomes responsible for performing the funerary rites for his father, including setting fire to the pyre.

In accordance with this transformation of the Buddhist ordination into a rite of passage, the first step of the tonsure prescribed in the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā*, i.e. the above-mentioned cutting of all hair but the *cūḍā* (see plate 2), is treated in the *bare chuyegu* as the *cūḍākarman* ritual. As such, it features in Padmashri Vajra Vajracharya's aforementioned handbook (1983 p. 1, cited by Gellner 1988, p. 78) in the solemn declaration of the intention (*saṃkalpa*) of the *bare chuyegu* ritual, which states that the taking of the observance of going forth is preceded by the fashioning of the *cūḍā* (*cūḍākaraṇapūrvakapravrajyāvratagrahaṇārtha*). Accordingly, this first tonsure is ritualized as in Brahmanical practice. Thus, before shaving the head a piece of gold is tied onto the tuft of hair that is to be left standing. In this way the *bare chuyegu* ritual ensures that the candidate has undergone the—from a Brahmanical perspective obligatory—*saṃskāra* of tonsure before being initiated. This procedure accords with the common Hindu practice (itself characteristic for the prominent tendency of lumping together originally distinct rites of passage) of performing the *cūḍākarman* for the first time just before the *upanayana*, rather than just repeating it on this occasion as would conform with orthodox injunctions that prescribe the performance of the *cūḍākarman* as a distinct *saṃskāra* for a much earlier age.

As a further consequence of the assimilation to the *upanayana* ritual, a number of elements of the Brahmanical ritual tradition came to be incorporated into the *bare chuyegu*. Some elements, such as the treading on a stone (*aśmāropana*) (see plate 1) or the taking of the seven steps (see plate 8) were taken over without changes, though learned Newars are often ready to offer interpretations that adapt the rites to a Buddhist context. For example, the seven steps are frequently likened to the first steps taken by the Buddha after his birth in Lumbini (Gellner 1988: 58). Such interpretations are, however, purely speculative and often problematic, as indeed in the example given here—the identification of the seven steps with those of the newly-born Śākyamuni does not take into account that the same rite of taking seven steps recurs in other contexts, notably in the wedding ritual. Anyway, from the perspective of ritual practice, such interpretations are secondary and do not affect the performance of the rituals. In addition to such elements as the seven steps borrowed from the Hindu *saṃskāras*, there are other features of the *bare chuyegu*, such as the giving of a new name or the beg-

ging for alms by the newly initiated, that match the Brahmanical tradition, but have always been integral parts of Buddhism.

Among the elements adapted from the Braminical tradition, it is particularly instructive to examine the treatment of the girdle (*mekhalā*), which also came to be a definite part of the *bare chuyegu* rite. At the beginning of the ritual the boys receive the girdle from one of the *saṃgha*'s elders and, exchanging it for their street clothes, tie it around their waist. As signs of their lay status, the tuft of hair and the girdle are subsequently cut off at the time of *pravrajyā*. The tying on of the girdle (*mekhalā*) is one of the central elements of the *upanayana*,⁴¹ of greater antiquity than the investiture with the sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*).

By first tying on the girdle and having a *cūḍā* fashioned, the boys in a sense pass first through the Hindu *saṃskāras* of *cūḍākarman* and *upanayana*, and then, with the subsequent removal of these two items when entering monkhood, progress beyond them.⁴² Hence the *bare chuyegu* ritual is not only crafted upon the model of the *upanayana* that ritualizes the stage of *brahmacarya* and the subsequent return, but in a restricted sense also incorporates and transcends the *upanayana* rite as such.⁴³ Admittedly, all I can actually point to in the *bare*

41 Cf. *Manusmṛti* II, 170: *brahmajanman mauñjibandhanacihnitam*.

42 This corresponds to the situation of both vocational and hereditary *saṃnyāsins* in Nepal (see below). They, too, can only renounce the world and take *saṃnyāsa* if they have undergone the *upanayana* ritual before (see Bouillier 1985: 203f). Similarly, in the *saṃnyāsa* ritual of the Dharma literature and Upaniṣads as summarized and analyzed by Sprockhoff (1994: 64–72), it is presumed that the renouncer has previously been a householder who set up and maintained the sacred fire in his homestead. Accordingly, the termination of the external sacred fire by way of absorption (*agnisamāropana*) has become an integral part of the *saṃnyāsa* rite that is performed even if the candidate has not previously set up a fire.

43 Drawing on information provided by G. Houtman, Gombrich (1984: 42–4) relates that the temporary ordination in Burmese Buddhism likewise incorporates elements from the Hindu *upanayana*. This includes notably a “*mantra* thread” which is put around the boy’s head by a particular ritual specialist called *beitheik*. This specialist is meant to be versed in the Vedas. Gombrich reasonably identifies this thread with the “Brahminical sacred thread” with which the twice-born boy is invested in the *upanayana*. However, it seems that in the Burmese ordination this thread is protective and—unlike the girdle in the *bare chuyegu*—not discarded later in the process of the ordination. Thus in the Burmese case there seems to be no implied subordination of the Brahminical initiation as in the Newar case. According to Gombrich the term *beitheik* derives from Sanskrit *abhiṣeka ācārya* and hence points back to a time when Burmese Buddhism was still Tantric. I find it difficult, however, to accept that an initiation master (*abhiṣeka ācārya*) in Tantric Buddhism would be grounded in the Vedas. Rather, it would seem more likely that the *beitheik* has to be traced back to a different Tantric tradition of Brahminical origins. It would follow that in the Burmese model of temporary ordination a Brahminical ritual, i.e. the *upanayana*, was

chuyegu ritual as corresponding to the *upanayana* is the element of the girdle. Unlike the *cūḍākarman*, the *upanayana* does not form part of the *saṃkalpa*. Moreover, neither it nor even the girdle feature in any way in the Sanskrit formulas. It follows that the girdle in the *bare chuyegu* does not stand specifically for the initiation into Brahmanical Hinduism. Rather, it represents the stage of the householder. This interpretation is confirmed by the Sanskrit formula spoken just before the boy candidate has his *cūḍā* cut off and does *pravrajyā* (see plate 3). It informs the boy that now (*adya*) he is at the stage of a *gṛhastha* and poses the question whether he really wants to go forth to become a monk. Moreover, when he dons his robes he does so in exchange for the girdle which is identified as the characteristic mark of the householder (*gṛhiliṅga*).⁴⁴ Thus the *bare chuyegu* may only be said to incorporate and transcend the *upanayana* rite inasmuch as this rite is identified with the stage of the *gṛhastha*—an identification justified by the function of the *upanayana* to effect the passage to this stage.

To pass through the stage of a householder is in conformity with the Hindu scheme of the four successive stages of life (*caturāśrama*), namely student, householder, forest dweller and renouncer. On the one hand, this scheme encompasses the *saṃnyāsa* tradition within the Brahmanical fold, on the other hand, it subsumes the *gṛhastha* as an inferior stage to be passed through.⁴⁵ However, while the *saṃnyāsa* originally marks the irreversible rupture with lay life as a whole, the discarding of *cūḍā* and girdle in the *bare chuyegu* ritual functions, by contrast, as part of a sequence of rites that integrate the boy into his caste within the framework of society. It is noteworthy that the binding force of the *āśrama* model can also be observed in the hagiography of the historical Buddha. It is related that Śākyamuni left his home and went forth to become an ascetic the very night that a son was born to him. (In the narrative's logic, could the last look that was cast by the Buddha upon his wife and new-born child before departing have served to ascertain the baby's male gender?) Like the Newar initiates, Śākya-

adapted to a Buddhist framework together with its ritual specialist. This model of adaptation could well have its root in Indian Tantric Buddhism. Indeed, the presence of the Brahminical *upanayana* in the Burmese temporary ordination suggests that we are dealing with an Indian innovation, conceivably catering specifically to the need of temporary ordination (which hence may have been a prevalent practice in Indian Buddhism).

44 *Kriyāsamgrahapañjikā* 250,6–251,1 (I have again changed the punctuation of the Śata Piṭaka edition and emended the text slightly in accordance with Tanemura 1997: 48): *aham itthaṃnāmā yāvajjīvaṃ gṛhiliṅgaṃ parityajāmi pravrajyāliṅgaṃ samādade*.

45 Note, however, that in the original form recorded in the Dharmasūtras the four *āśramas* were conceived of as alternative models of life that could be chosen freely. As Olivelle (1993) has shown, it was only later that the *āśramas* assumed their classical form as stages of life to be passed through successively.

muni could only go forth after he had become a full-fledged householder, which here includes marriage and the fathering of a son—from a Brahmanical perspective a holy duty for the perpetuation of the ancestral lineage and for guaranteeing the maintenance of the *śraddhā* rites. This reading of the Buddha's hagiography is in accordance with the ritualized wedding dialogue that among Newar Buddhists is exchanged traditionally between the parties of bride and groom. There the need for the groom to marry is brought home in the following way: "A man cannot fulfil his sacramental religious duty without going through the Ten Sacraments. In accordance with this rule the prince Siddhārtha first married Yaśodharā and only then did he renounce the homely life and go forth to obtain complete enlightenment" (cf. Gellner 1992: 228–230). Furthermore, this interpretation is reinforced by the deviant tradition preserved in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, according to which Śākyamuni impregnated his wife in the very night that he abandoned his palace and took up the life of a mendicant.⁴⁶ Clearly, according to the logic of this tradition he then did not cohabit with his wife out of passion. Rather, he did so as part of the sequence of renunciatory acts, and this sequence incorporated the fulfilment of the duty to perpetuate one's ancestral lineage as a prerequisite for renunciation. Similarly, when taking *saṃnyāsa*, vocational *saṃnyāsins* perform as part of their mortuary rites the *sapinḍīkaraṇa* ritual, which integrates them into their ancestral lineage, thereby ensuring its unbroken continuity.

The *bare chuyegu* rite incorporates not only the Hindu *saṃskāras* in an inclusivist vein, but also the Vinaya ordination ritual itself, namely by embedding it in the larger frame of Mahāyāna Buddhism with a Tantric orientation. Thus the *bare chuyegu* is introduced by the request to become a *bhikṣu* with the express purpose of attaining buddhahood for the welfare of all beings.⁴⁷ In the Pali tradition, by contrast, the intention expressed at this point is to set an end to (one's own) suffering and realize *nirvāṇa* (*dukkhanissaraṇa-nibbānasacchikaraṇatthāya*).⁴⁸ More importantly, the ordination is concluded by the adoption of Mahāyāna Buddhism (*mahāyānacaryā*) and Tantric practices (*śrīguruvajrasattvakraśvarasya caryā*) which are enjoined on the pupil when he renounces the robes

46 Cf. Strong 1997.

47 See Vajracharya 1983: ii, cited by Gellner 1988: 77: *adhyeṣayāmy ahaṃ nāthaṃ tvaṃ me śāstā mahāvibho | asmākam anumāpāya bhikṣubhāvaṃ dadātu naḥ | anekaguṇasaṃyuktam trailokye durlabhaṃ padaṃ | asmadarthena hi nātha sarveṣāṃ duḥkhabhāgināṃ | hitasukhanimittāya buddhatvapadaṃ prāptaye ||* The passages cited by Lienhard (1999: 63) only express the candidate's aspiration to obtain buddhahood, but do not mention that this is motivated by the desire to help and rescue all suffering beings.

48 Cf. Dickson 1875: 3.

a few days later, and with it monastic Śrāvākayāna.⁴⁹ To be sure, this renunciation of the robes is ambiguous. It also means defeat for the boy who finds the monk's way of life too hard to follow, as expressly stated in some versions of the *bare chuyegu* liturgy.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, what matters is that the boy passes beyond celibate monasticism to the sphere of Mahāyāna Buddhism and Tantric practices, in accordance with the assumed superiority of the Mahāyāna that has superseded the Śrāvākayāna in the Newar tradition.

The inclusion and subordination of the Brahmanical *saṃskāras* and the Vinaya ordination within the framework of the *bare chuyegu* ritual is not only effected by the boys' passage from one stage to another in the way outlined above. Rather, on a different plane this subordination also finds its expression in the way in which the *saṃskāras* and the ordination are embedded in the overarching framework of a Vajrayāna ritual. For a start, they are preceded and followed by sets of introductory and concluding Tantric rites that frame the *bare chuyegu* ritual as a whole. Moreover, as thematic ritual actions they are performed within the context of the fire ritual.

It is in accordance with the transformation of the ordination ceremony into an initiatory rite of passage that the boys are liberally decked with various kinds of ornaments when they don the robes, that is, at the very moment of *pravrajyā* which normally functions as the occasion for precisely the opposite, namely the shedding of all jewellery and other finery (see plate 6). The ornaments put on by the newly made *bares* are of the kind characteristically offered to and worn by deities. Fittingly, subsequently during the *bare chuyegu* ritual (notably, when the boys are taken around town) honorific parasols are held over them (see plate 7), just as when deities are being paraded. This shows that on one level the *bare chuyegu* serves to sanctify the boys, a point that unlearned Newar participants seem to be instinctively aware of when they explain the *pravrajyā* rite in terms of the boys' deification. This aspect of the *bare chuyegu* ritual is at odds with the common perception of the Buddhist *pravrajyā* as a mere ordination, but is less surprising from the perspective of Vajrayāna where the practitioner aims at his identification with a chosen deity, and in this sense at his own deification.

49 Cf. Gellner 1988: 61–63.

50 For instance, the manuscripts "T1" and "T2" used by Gellner (1988: 62) prescribe that the boy addresses the guru with the words: "I did not know how very difficult [it is to keep the vow of *pravrajyā*]; I cannot follow it forever" (*sudullabhaṃ na jānāmi sadā dhāryaṃ na śakyate*). Upon this the guru retorts: "I asked You before whether or not You were capable or not," and adds: "It is exceedingly difficult to obtain the so-called *pravrajyā*; to maintain it is the highest vow" (*sudullabhaṃ pravrajyākhaṃ dhāraṇaṃ vratam uttamam*). Cf. also Lienhard 1999: 98.

Furthermore, the sanctification of the boys in the *bare chuyegu* also makes sense in the light of the Hindu *upanayana* ritual which initiates the boys into the divine sphere of brahmanhood and also sanctifies them.⁵¹ What is more, the custom of decking the candidate with ornaments is attested for the *upanayana* tradition itself.⁵²

Another aspect to be taken up in this context concerns the purity restrictions that are imposed upon the initiates during the *bare chuyegu* ritual, starting in fact on the day before the *pravrajyā* itself. In accordance with Hindu concepts of purity, the boys are not to touch leather or dogs. Nor may they eat salty or spicy food, let alone onions, garlic or meat. This is at odds both with the Theravāda rejection of a differentiation between pure and impure food as spiritually irrelevant (or even counter-productive), and also at odds with the higher Tantric ideal of transcending the pure-impure dichotomy. However, notions of ritual purity are pervasive in Buddhist rituals and not a specific Newar development. Rather, they are ubiquitous already in the ritual tradition of Indian Buddhism, and are also a marked feature of Tibetan Buddhism.

The sanctification of the boys and the observance of purity restrictions can be made sense of if we view the *bare chuyegu* ritual outside its Buddhist context and consider it as a classical initiatory rite of passage. In accordance with the standard pattern described by Arnold van Gennep in his *Les Rites des Passage*,⁵³ the *bare chuyegu* may be viewed as spanning three stages, namely 1) that of separation at the beginning of the ritual when—marked by the shedding of clothes and hair—the boy is segregated from the world of uninitiated childhood, 2) that of transition in-between when the boy is a monk, and 3) that of incorporation (*agrégation*) into a new social context at the end of the ritual, when—marked by the donning of new street clothes—the boy is integrated into the world of male adults who are full-fledged members of the *saṃgha* and caste community. In this transitional phase the boy exists on a sacred plane, as indicated by the ornaments sanctifying him. At the same time, he is particularly vulnerable in this liminal phase. Hence the mentioned purity restrictions may be viewed as particular precautions, protecting and safeguarding the boy during his critical passage from one stage of life to the next.

51 It is this sanctifying effect of the *upanayana* and other *saṃskāras* that is at the basis of the practice of imparting the *saṃskāras* as an integral part of the consecration rituals.

52 Cf. Gonda 1980: 380.

53 Cf. van Gennep 1960: 11: “[...] a complete scheme of rites of passage [...] includes pre-liminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation) [...]”.

Another conspicuous feature of the *bare chuyegu* ritual is the direct and indirect involvement of the boy's family and relatives. The paternal aunt has the most important function as she takes the boy through the entire ritual from the first to the last day. In particular, she is charged with taking care of the boy's hair: she catches it on a platter when it is cut (see plates 2 and 3) and discards it in a river a few days later, once the boy has disrobed. In the case of *vajrācārya* boys (see below) from Kathmandu, she may also assist when the *ācāryābhiṣeka* is imparted as an immediate sequel to the *bare chuyegu* rite. Besides the paternal aunt, the maternal uncle is also obliged to participate. Most importantly, he has to present the boy with the new clothes to be put on upon after disrobing. In addition to the paternal aunt and maternal uncle, the parents and other relatives also take part. They are present on the day of *pravrajyā* and offer alms to the boy just afterwards. On the two intervening days before the disrobing, the boy is taken to visit paternal and maternal relatives from whom he again receives presents that are ritualized as alms. Moreover, a banquet may be organized for the boy to which close and distant relatives as well as friends are invited. This is in addition to the traditional feast that is served on the day of the *pravrajyā* to all participants but the ordained boys themselves. Thus, in a way characteristic of Newar society, the ritual serves as an important occasion for familial bonding with paternal and maternal relatives beyond the immediate confines of the initiate's home.

The *bare chuyegu* includes a procession of all the newly ordained boys from the monastery through the town to the palace where they deposit betel leaves and nuts as well as coins on the royal throne, in order to give notice to the king of their new status (see plate 10). The procession is led by the priests and Newar musicians. With the honorific parasols (*chattrā*), the red or yellow robes, and the aunts and uncles in their best outfits, the procession is also a public demonstration and affirmation of the *bares'* religious and caste identity.

There is a further way in which I want to deal with the function of the *bare chuyegu* ritual, namely by relating it to the equivalent initiation ritual performed for Newar Buddhists who are not of *bare* descent and hence have no inherited connections with monkhood. These boys who come from trader, artisan or farmer castes undergo the so-called *kaytā pūjā*.⁵⁴ With the exception of the ritual

54 Lienhard (1999: 102–112) has described this rite under the title “Die Weihe der Kastenbuddhisten”. He, however, does not deal with the preparatory rites leading to the *kaytā pūjā*. In Kathmandu, for instance, boys of the farmer castes (*jyāpu*) pass several nights (*vaḥlāḥ*) at shrines linked with the locality from which they come before they undergo the *kaytāpūjā*. For their sense of social and religious identity this practice is equally, if not more, important than the *kaytāpūjā* as such.

framework, this ritual is clearly modelled on the Hindu *upanayana* rite. (The *kaytā* is the aforementioned girdle that is tied on as part of the *upanayana*.) Most importantly, unlike the *bares* these boys do not have their *cūḍā* and girdle cut off and thus do not cross over the threshold to monkhood. Moreover, they do not even go for refuge, let alone take the five *upāsaka* vows.⁵⁵ This allows the *bares* to maintain a distinct identity as Buddhist specialists elevated above the rest of the Buddhist laity, even though after their *bare chuyegu* they go on to marry and live the life of perfectly normal householders. Thus I do not consider Newar Buddhism as a “Buddhism without monks” as Michael Allen and more recently Siegfried Lienhard (1999) have put it. Rather, I prefer to view it as a Buddhism with monks who have turned householders without really giving up their identity as monks. Hence I find fitting the term “householder monk” used by David Gellner in his writings.⁵⁶ It seems that this perspective was shared by Max Weber (1921: 308), who refers to the disrobing at the end of the *bare chuyegu* ritual merely as the dispensation from the vows. The *bares*’ continued identity as monks is clearly borne out by the fact that some sections among them are traditionally even called *bhikṣus* (*śākyabhikṣu*, *cailakabhikṣu*).⁵⁷ There is justification for this identity as monks insofar as the *bares* are members of what is considered a monastic community with a living monastic cult which they maintain. Moreover, on the occasion of major rituals requiring purity, the *bares* shave off their entire head of hair without leaving a tuft, thus reasserting their identity as Buddhist monks. Fittingly, once a year during the festival of *paṃjādān*⁵⁸ (celebrated routinely during the “month of virtue” [*guṃlā*] that coincides with much

55 Note, however, that according to Minayeff’s (1894: 296–8) summary of the *Pāpaparimocana*, apparently a Nepalese text belonging to his private collection, the taking of the *upāsaka* vows is obligatory for Buddhists of *brahman*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* or *sūdra* caste. I had no access to this text, but found similar statements in the *Avadāna* literature from Nepal. The *Ahorātravratākathā*, for instance, specifies that members of the four aforementioned “castes” (*jāti* in the text’s terminology) are entitled to engage in the practice of venerating *caityas* for a whole day and night (*ahorātravrata*) (*Ahorātravratākathā* verse 108 and paragraph 10 of the prose version as published in Handurukande 2000). It has to be taken into account, however, that the mentioned texts contrast *brahman*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and *sūdras* with low castes (*hīnajāti*, *duṣṭajāti*) or with the “other 36 castes” (*ṣoḍaśaviṃśati-jāti*), who are apparently excluded from the mentioned practice.

56 Cp. Jaffe’s phrase “Neither Monk nor Layman” entitling his study of “Clerical Marriage in Modern Japanese Buddhism” (Jaffe 2002).

57 Cf. Gellner 1989a and Gellner 1992: 165f.

58 *Paṃjādān* is commonly understood to correspond to Sanskrit *pañcadāna*, but this sanskritization is certainly not correct. Lienhard (1999: 179) derives *paṃjādān* from *paṇḍitajādāna*, meaning “alms in the form of boiled rice for the learned”.

of August),⁵⁹ the Buddhist lay castes give alms (including such items as brooms and toothpicks typically donated to monks) to the *bares*, thereby affirming the *bares*' identity as monks and their own identity as lay devotees.

Though paradoxical, the institution of a caste of householder monks is not as unique as one might suppose. For instance, in Nepal the members of a *saṃnyāsin* caste in the Hindu fold also marry and take up common worldly professions, even though they renounce, like the *bares*, the status of laymen after they have passed through the *upanayana*, namely when they are initiated as *saṃnyāsins* and accordingly have their tuft of hair cut (see Bouillier 1985: 203–206). At the time of death their funeral rites—burial instead of cremation—confirm their status as *saṃnyāsins* (ibid.: 208–210; cf. Michaels 1994: 340). The case of the Newar *jogis* who are identified as descendants of Kāṇphaṭa yogis seems to be similar (see Levy 1990: 368ff). Thus the householder monks are not a specifically Buddhist phenomenon. In contrast, they are typical of the paradoxical integration of hereditary renouncers into the fold of Indian society and the caste system.

The *bares* are the backbone of Newar Buddhism. Without their sense of identity as Buddhist monks of sorts and without the cults and traditions they perpetuate, Newar Buddhism would most likely have been absorbed into the Hindu fold, as happened in Northern India. This is so because among the lay castes without a monastic connection, Buddhism is not firmly anchored and rooted, and hence is not institutionalized enough to guarantee a sense of distinctness from the Hindu surrounding. Compare the sense of religious identity of a lay Newar Buddhist who performs his *upanayana* in very much the same way as a Hindu and retains his *cūḍā*, with—let us say—that of a Christian convert in India who, at least in the past, had to cut off his *cūḍā* and publicly dine together with untouchables in order to mark his break with Hinduism. The fact that the institution of monkhood and monasticism can even without vocational, celibate monks be of such pivotal importance as it is in Newar Buddhism shows how vital it is for the integrity and survival of Buddhist societies.

The boys undertaking the *bare chuyegu* initiation fall—again by the principle of patrilineal descent—into two groups, namely the *śākyas* and the *vajrācāryas*. After the *bare chuyegu* the latter go on to become Tantric masters and for this receive the *ācāryābhiṣeka* (New.: *ācāḥ luyegu*) and the matching *mantra*. In Kathmandu this rite is normally performed in the secrecy of the monastery's Tantric shrine (*āgam*), immediately after the boys have disrobed. After the *ācāryābhiṣeka* has been imparted, the boys perform their first fire ritual, thereby demonstrating that they have become *vajrācāryas* and are, unlike all other

59 On the festival of *paṃjadān* see Gellner 1992: 180–183.

Buddhists, authorized to perform the *homa*. Thus the *ācāryābhiṣeka* can, from a sociological perspective, be viewed as part of the boy's rite of passage which introduces him to his religion and into his status group, namely that of the *vajrācāryas*.

It can thus be observed that in Newar Buddhism a tiered system of initiation developed. On the lowest tier are the impure castes which are completely excluded from initiation rituals. Above them come the middle-range castes who perform, within the framework of a Buddhist ritual, an *upanayana* along Hindu lines, but who are not admitted into the fold of full-fledged Buddhism. They are surpassed by the *bares* who by virtue of their *bare chuyegu* become "householder monks". The *bares*, in turn, are differentiated by their access, or lack of access, to Tantric priesthood. On account of this access the *vajrācāryas* may be viewed as a group elevated above the common *bares*. As I mentioned, this tiered system allows Newar Buddhism to uphold the strict separation of monkhood and laity even in a context in which the institution of "vocational", unmarried monks long ago vanished. It also creates "caste" distinctions in a way that is reminiscent of the Brahmanical tradition where the *sūdras* are excluded from initiation, and where the *upanayana* ritual is structured in such a way that it implements (and in a sense even creates) the caste distinctions between *vaiśyas*, *kṣatriyas* and Brahmins.

For an appraisal of Newar Buddhism, it has to be borne in mind that the rites of passage examined here are not the only means of access to Tantric Buddhist teaching. On another plane there is the tradition of imparting a set of highest Tantric initiations (commonly referred to as *dīkṣā* rather than *abhiṣeka*) in a complex series of rituals, lasting some ten days (see Gellner 1992: 266–281). These initiations do not confer a special social status in the way the *bare chuyegu* and *ācāḥ luyegu* do. In theory, it should even be kept secret that one has taken them. Because these initiations do not have the same social implications as the initiatory rites of passage, they are accessible not only to male *vajrācāryas*, but—irrespective of gender⁶⁰—also to *sākyas* and even to the uppermost lay castes with no inherited link to monastic communities. It is these initiations rather than the initiatory rites of passage that are viewed as soteriologically relevant. Thus the highest forms of teaching in Newar Buddhism are not limited to

60 It would be wrong to view the participation of women exclusively in terms of their roles as female partners. Rather they, too, are treated as initiates in their own rights and receive esoteric *mantras* enabling them to engage as independent subjects in Tantric practices. As nowadays initiation is not only imparted to couples, it is accordingly possible for females as well as for males to receive Tantric initiation singly, without a partner.

male *vajrācāryas*, but are imparted more freely than appears on first sight. Nonetheless, the point remains that the large section of the population ranking below the upper lay castes is excluded from such teachings on the basis of caste. They, however, tend to have esoteric cults of their own. On the whole little is known about these cults, except that they are deeply rooted in autochthonous forms of religiosity.

To sum up, though the rite of initiation into monkhood in the Newar Buddhist tradition has preserved the structure, and to a considerable extent even the wording, of the canonical Vinaya tradition of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, it has been fundamentally transformed by 1) being turned into a rite of passage, analogous to the *upanayana*, that enacts only ritually the stage of *brahmacarya* and the subsequent return, 2) being embedded in the framework of Tantric Mahāyāna Buddhism, and 3) being adapted to its Newar setting. In accordance with the Brahmanical scheme of the *catuṛāśrama*, the *cūḍākarman* and the tying on of the girdle as an allusion to the *upanayana* came to be incorporated into the *bare chuyegu* as rites identified with the stage of the householder that needs to be passed through. Similarly, the monastic *pravrajyā* rite (which itself in turn subsumes the conversion to an *upāsaka* as a first step before the adoption of monkhood) is treated as a stage to be covered on the way to the initiation into Mahāyāna in its Tantric form. This approach of incorporating the *saṃskāras* and the *pravrajyā* by subordinating them as stages that need to be transcended is typically Indian. It is characteristic of the way in which the Indian tradition transforms itself without breaking with the past, and it also bears traces of what Paul Hacker has called inclusivism, namely the tendency in the cultural history of India to deal with elements of rival traditions by relegating and subordinating them within one's own framework rather than by rejecting them outright (see Oberhammer 1983). If one views the *bare chuyegu* as part of the larger picture of initiation rites performed as *saṃskāras* for boys of castes with a Buddhist identity, it becomes clear that much the same mechanisms are at work as in a Hindu context. This also applies if one views the paradoxical status of the *bare*s as householder monks in the light of the aforementioned castes of hereditary *saṃnyāsins* or *jogis*. Thus, even though the Buddhist ritual tradition in Nepal expresses itself in its own idiom and thereby preserves its distinct identity, the operation of forces and the evolution of patterns similar to those in Hinduism can be observed. This shows that, for the study of Buddhist phenomena such as rites, it is important to take Hindu parallels into account and to refrain from dealing with Buddhism as a phenomenon divorced from its Indian setting.

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Plates

All photos have been taken by the author on the occasion of the *bare chuyegu* ritual performed in Mu Bāhāl Kathmandu on 28 February, 2001.



Plate 1: The treading onto the stone (*aśmāropana*). On his way to the tonsure (*cūḍākaraṇa*) that precedes the ordination, the candidate, led by his paternal aunt, steps on a stone mortar and pestle, and with his right foot grinds black lentils. According to a common interpretation, he thereby overcomes potential obstacles on the new path that he is about to set out on. The rite is performed among Buddhist and Hindu Newars in the same way also as part of other *saṃskāras*.



Plate 2: The ritual tonsure (*cūdākarāṇa*) preceding the ordination. The hair caught by the boy's paternal aunt (*nini*) on a platter is kept until the day of disrobing when it is ritually discarded by the aunt in the Biṣṇumatī river.

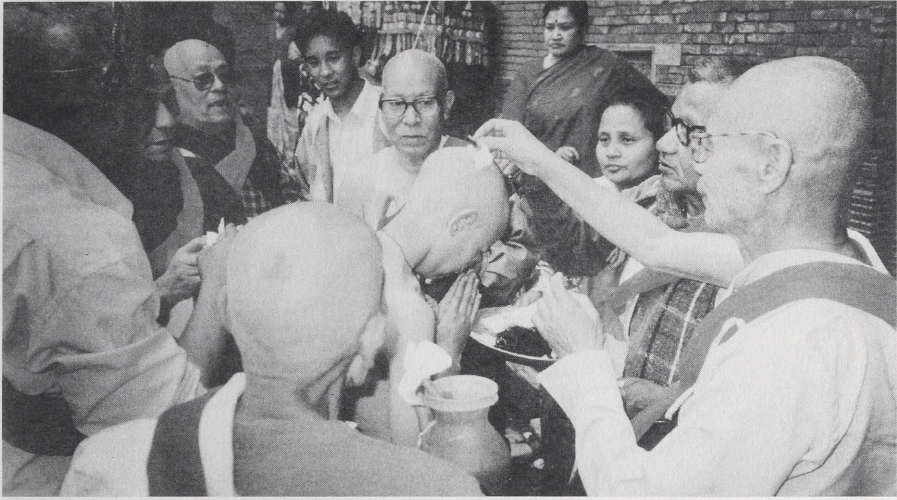


Plate 3: The cutting of the hair tuft (*cūḍā*) at the time of “going forth”. The *cūḍā* is cut by the most senior member of the *saṃgha* of Mu Bāhāl. Together with the other elders of the *saṃgha* he functions as sponsor (*yajamāna*) of the ritual. The officiating main priest (*mūlācārya*) on the left wears the characteristic helmet-like crown adorned with the Five Buddhas. Again, the hair is caught by the boy’s paternal aunt on a platter. The other elders are standing with clay vessels in order to pour the “waters of the four oceans” over the boy once the tuft has been cut.



Plate 4: The presentation of the robes. One of the elders of the monastic community into which the boy is ordained presents the robe and other implements of monkhood to the candidate after the tonsure of the *cūḍā*.

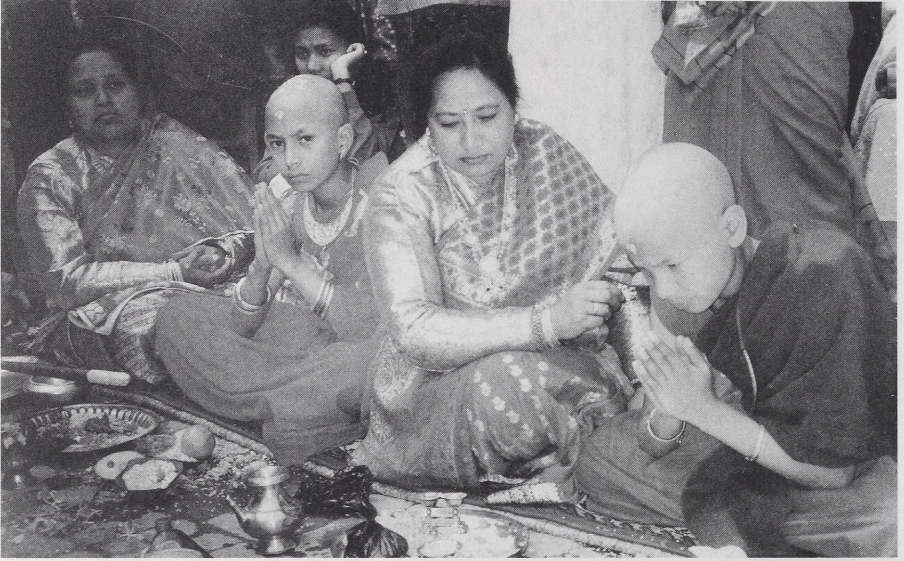


Plate 5: The pledge of monkhood. After having put on the new robes, the boys pledge to abandon the dress of a householder and in exchange take up the monk's robe for the whole of their life.

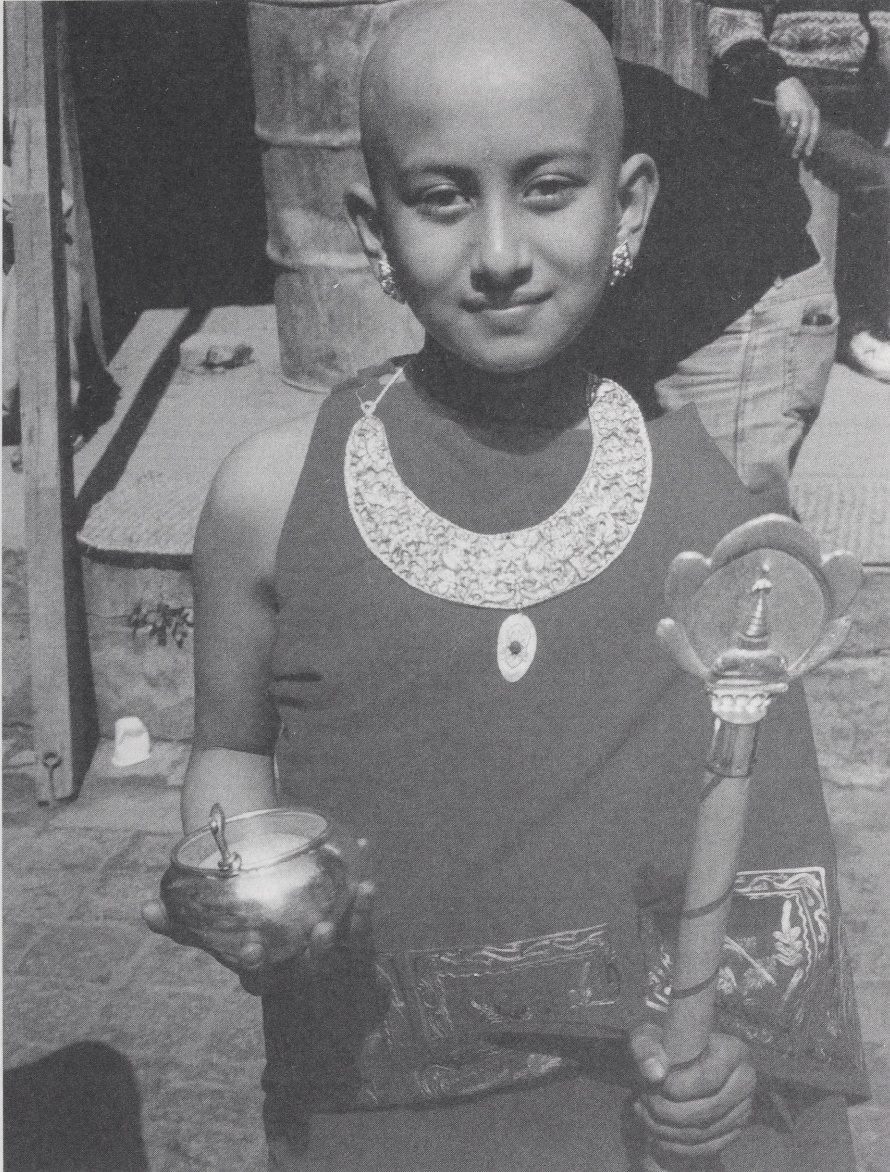


Plate 6: A newly-ordained boy in his monastic garb. In addition to the robe, alms bowl and staff (the finial of which is marked with a *caitya* in typical fashion), the boys also put on earrings and other ornaments. They thereby break the vow of renouncing all forms of adornments which they pledge at this very occasion in accordance with the *vinaya*. This bears out that the *pravrajyā* in Newar Buddhism is not so much a monastic ordination as an initiation into the sacred realm of Buddhism.



Plate 7: In the shade of the honorific parasol. While seated to perform further rites, the same boy is shaded with an honorific parasol. This is indicative of the quasi-divine status that he is assuming in course of the *bare chuyegu* ritual.

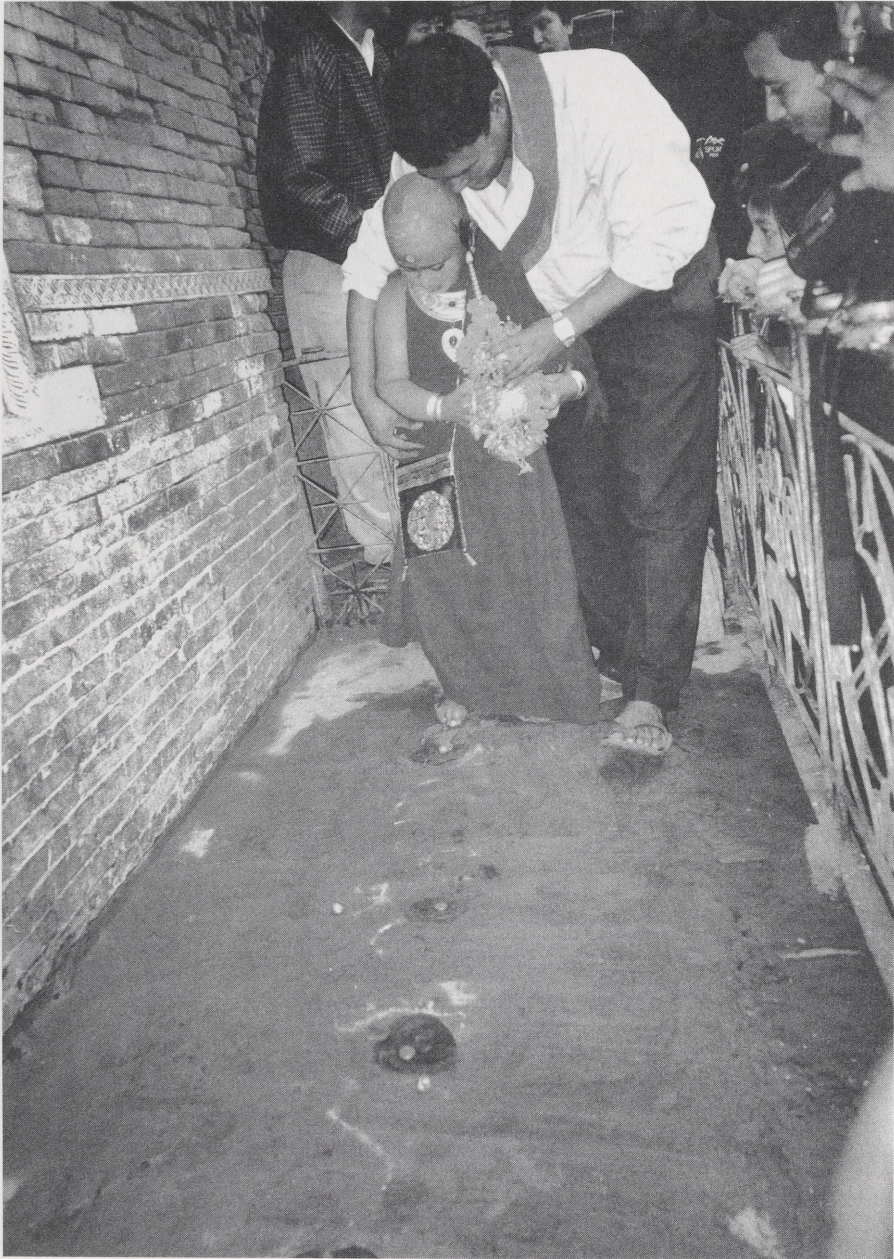


Plate 8: The taking of the Seven Steps. On his way to the main exoteric shrine housing the principal Buddha image, the newly ordained boy takes seven steps. He is led by the main priest who pours out water from the pitcher thus purifying the path taken by the boy.



Plate 9: The introduction of the newly-ordained boys to the *kvāpāhdyah*. Upon the conclusion of the ordination the boys are—for the first time in their life—taken into the shrine room of the monastery's principal exoteric deity, the *kvāpāhdyah*, here a black image of Akṣobhya that can be seen in the background. As only ordained members are entitled to enter this shrine room, this marks their new status as members of the monastery's *saṃgha*. The boys' veneration of the deity on this occasion also marks their introduction to the cult of the monastery towards which they henceforth will have to contribute.



Plate 10: Group photo of newly ordained monks with their paternal aunts. Upon conclusion of the *bare chuyegu*, the boys are taken to the royal palace in Hanumān Dhokā where they give formal notice of their ordination by depositing pan, betel nuts and coins on the throne. In the courtyard of the palace, group photos of the newly initiated boys with their relatives are taken in various formations, bearing out that—in a manner characteristic for Newar society—the *bare chuyegu* serves as an important occasion for family bonding.