

JIABS

Journal of the International
Association of Buddhist Studies

Volume 24 Number 2 2001

Buddhist Nuns

Peter SKILLING <i>Eṣā agrā: Images of Nuns in (Mūla-)Sarvāstivādin Literature</i>	135
Ivette M. VARGAS-O'BRIAN <i>The Life of dGe slong ma dPal mo: The Experience of a Leper, Founder of a Fasting Ritual, a Transmitter of Buddhist Teachings on Suffering and Renunciation in Tibetan Religious History.....</i>	157
Kim GUTSCHOW <i>What Makes a Nun? Apprenticeship and Ritual Passage in Zanskar, North India.....</i>	187
Sarah LEVINE <i>The Finances of a Twentieth Century Buddhist Mission: Building Support for the Theravāda Nuns' Order of Nepal.....</i>	217
Peter SKILLING <i>Nuns, Laywomen, Donors, Goddesses Female Roles in Early Indian Buddhism</i>	241
Ann HEIRMAN <i>Chinese Nuns and their Ordination in Fifth Century China</i>	275
Notes on the Contributors.....	305

WHAT MAKES A NUN? APPRENTICESHIP AND RITUAL PASSAGE IN ZANGSKAR, NORTH INDIA.

KIM GUTSCHOW*

This essay examines how and why ordained nuns serve both the Buddha and their families in Kashmir today. The rites of passage by which a nun comes to the nunnery contrive to make her part and parcel of the mundane village sphere in a different sense than monks. It begins by exploring how the erasure of nuns in Buddhist studies was due to the misrecognition and confusion over ordained nuns and elderly renunciants.

The Erasure of Nuns From Buddhist Scholarship

Scholars like Don Lopez who follow in the wake of Said have deconstructed the field of Buddhist studies by showing how the curators of the Buddha constructed their object of study, Buddhism¹. Due to a number of reasons including research methods and materials available, Buddhist studies has privileged doctrine over practice, text over local informant, classical sources over the vernacular, and monks over nuns. When Buddhist studies first began in 18th century Europe, it relied heavily on texts brought back from Asia as colonial booty. The antiquarians who first attempted a systematic study of Buddhist sources consistently privileged ancient texts over modern ones because they thought that earlier scriptures would offer a more pristine and original form of Buddhism, untainted by historical decay and decline. By the same arguments, they privileged doctrinal explanations and accounts over those offered by modern informants, who were generally held to be unreliable if not ignorant of their own classical literature. Paraphrasing Lopez (1995: 13), the Orientalist took charge

* Brandeis University, Dept. of Anthropology, Mail stop 006, Waltham, MA 02454-9110, Gutschow@Brandeis.edu.

¹ Lopez (1995, 1998) provides marvelously detailed accounts of the birth of Buddhist and Tibetan studies.

of representing the Orient because he believed the Orient to be incapable of representing itself.

Interestingly, modern Tibetan studies has also privileged both text and doctrine, albeit for rather different reasons. For much of the 20th century, Tibet remained an elusive object of study, which only few foreigners were able to penetrate. When the Chinese occupation and attacks forced an entire religious elite into exile in 1959, scholars were left in the awkward position of studying Tibetan Buddhism without Tibet. They overcame this difficulty by translating the texts which had been smuggled out of Tibet, and focussing on doctrinal, philosophical, and historical issues rather than lived religious experience or ritual context in which these texts may have been used. Even those scholars who explored the religion in exile or the politics of displacement tended to privilege Tibet as the source of authentic religious culture. By the same token, the practices of Tibetan Buddhism along the Indo-Tibetan borderlands were often compared to an ideal, but vanished template of Buddhism inside Tibet. Thus, the Tibetan Buddhism found in Kashmir since the 10th century was held to be a derivative or corrupt form of the Buddhism found in Tibet itself.

My approach turns over these tendency by focussing on the local, the vernacular, and female aspects of Buddhist renunciation in a Kashmir. I will focus on the practice of Buddhism in eastern Kashmir within the region of Zangskar. A formerly Buddhist kingdom once ruled by a direct descendant of the last king in Tibet's early dynasty which has been Buddhist almost as long as Tibet has, Zangskar today forms the southern and safer half of Kargil district — the site of the recent military clashes between India and Pakistan in 1999. Roughly 95% of the local population is Buddhist, while the remaining 5% are Sunni Muslims. Although Zangskar covers an area twice the size of Rhode Island, its extreme aridity and elevation at the edge of the Tibetan plateau make it one of the least populated regions in India. Monks and nuns, who make up about 4% of the total population, live in nine nunneries and seven monasteries which follow the Gelug and Kagyud schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Nuns make up roughly one fourth of the entire monastic population. This percentage may be one of the highest in the entire Himalayan realm. It is more than twice as high as the ratio of nuns

to monks in Tibet and the Himalayan borderlands before 1959, and over four times as high as the ratio in Tibetan refugee monasteries by the late 1980's².

The classical Tibetan sources which describe the origin and development of Buddhism in Zangskar have been dominated by metaphors of conquest and penetration, as well as a wholesale erasure of nuns. Local histories and legends celebrate the activities of saints, monks, and kings in subduing (*'dul ba*) or taming a landscape conceived as demonic and female³. The erasure of nuns in the historical record is due more to the way in which monks and kings dominated the Buddhist economy of merit than in any real absence of nuns or female renunciants, which are alluded to in both written and oral sources. The 19th and early 20th century European scholarship on Buddhism in Kashmir, including both colonial Gazeteers and extensive travel literature by the participants in the Great Game over Central Asia, failed to see nuns in the territory they catalogued and mapped so carefully in other ways. Yet even modern scholarship on Buddhism in Kashmir has ignored nuns which comprise one fifth of Zangskar's monastic population⁴. The erasure of nunneries lies in the local as well as the foreign imagination. When an eminent Zangskari monk once told me, "there is no gonpa in Zangla village," I was surprised. I knew that Zangla did in fact house a nunnery and that gonpa (*dgon pa*) — literally solitary place — is a gender neutral term which can refer to either a monastery and nunnery. Yet just as the generic term man leaves

² Shakabpa (1967) notes that there was one nun for every nine monks in Tibet before 1959. Havnevik (1992: 85) states that there were 653 nuns and 6337 monks in India, Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan before 1959, and 340 nuns and 6278 monks in Tibetan refugee monasteries by the late 1980's. Gutschow (1998: 97) reports that Zangskar's nine nunneries housed 116 nuns while its seven monasteries housed 297 monks in 1997.

³ The myth of the demoness is found in many parts of the Tibetan cultural realm. See Aris (1979), Gyatso (1987), and Gutschow (1997a). Aggarwal (1994, 1997) and Beek (1996, 1997) critique the Tibetan studies approach to Ladakh.

⁴ Western scholars who largely ignore or misrecognize nuns in their accounts of Buddhism in Kashmir include Crook and Osmaston (1994: 804, 674), Dendaletche (1985), Dargyay (1980, 1987, 1988), Dollfus (1989), Friedl (1983), Kaplanian (1981), Petech (1977, 1998), Schuh (1976, 1983), Snellgrove and Skorupski (1980). Local historians who ignore nunneries include: Gergan (1976), Tsering (1979), Paldan (1982), Shakspo (1988a, 1988b, 1993), Zodpa and Skakspo (1979). Scholars who detail the situation of nuns in Kashmir include Green (1997), Grimshaw (1983a, 1983b, 1992), Gutschow (1998, 1997a, 2000a, 2000b, 2001), and Reis (1983).

out half of humanity, gonpa overlooks a substantial portion of Zangskar's monastic institutions, namely nunneries.

The remarkable absence of nuns in the literature on Buddhism in Kashmir is due to what one might call a category failure. The scholars who ignored and misrecognized nuns, did so out of oversight as much as oblivion. Some failed to see nuns right in front of their eyes because they held a narrow doctrinal image of what a nun ought to resemble. Scholars were perplexed by nuns, often not in robes, who worked side by side with laywomen in the fields. Those scholars who do mention nuns often described them in degraded terms as widows, divorcees, single mothers, or unhappy woman who could not find a husband, probably because they had been speaking to female renunciants not nuns⁵.

Much of the misrecognition of nuns was due to the confusion between ordained nuns and female renunciants, due to their misunderstanding of the local vernacular. In local idiom, ordained novices and female renunciants are referred to by the same name: *jo mo*, although the latter are also referred to more specifically as household nuns' (*grong pa'i jo mo*)⁶. Urban elites rarely use the honorific Tibetan term for female novices, Getsulma (*dge tshul ma*), although male novices are usually called by the honorific term, Getsul. Yet the distinction between the two roles is clear in local ritual and religious terms. Female renunciants may take up five precepts — not to kill, steal, lie, commit sexual misconduct, or take intoxicants — and shave their head, but they have no formal ritual roles in village life. By contrast, ordained nuns undergo a lengthy ritual apprenticeship and several rites of passage which prepare them to be members of the monastic assembly (*dge bdun*, *saṃgha*) and train them in the rituals required at household and village wide events.

⁵ Lopez's (1998:211) critical deconstruction of Tibetan Buddhism repeats the common tropes about nuns when it notes, "Unmarried daughters often became nuns (sometimes remaining at home). Other women became nuns to escape a bad marriage, to avoid pregnancy, or after the death of a spouse." In contrast to this stereotype, not one of the 120 nuns I have interviewed in Kashmir over the last decade was divorced or a single mother, and only one was a widow.

⁶ Compare Klein's (1985) description of unordained and unmarried women in eastern Tibet known as *ka ma*, who dressed like Buddhist nuns and could join the circle of monks' tents in order to concentrate on religious practices. Ortner (1989, 1996: 119) also describes unordained women ('*khor ba*) or 'peripheral ones', who are affiliated with Sherpa nunneries in Nepal.

While ordained novices exemplify the intellectual and spiritual elite of their society. By contrast, female renunciants may be the object of derogatory epithets like ‘self-willed woman’ (*mo rang mo*) and proverbs like, “a woman without a husband is like a stable without a door” (*bang ra sgo med, bu mo mag med*).

Residential and labor arrangements also contributed to the confusion between ordained nuns, renunciants, and laywomen. All of these women perform domestic and agricultural chores on their family estates. While ordained nuns have a room of their own at their monastic compound, they may live temporarily in the village during busy agricultural seasons or caring for their aged parents. Monks, on the other hand, forgo many of their parental obligations when they join a monastic community, especially as they are sent throughout the monastery domain as village level ritual officiants. Institutional poverty and lack of ritual earnings forces nuns to work on their family farms in exchange for their daily subsistence. Monks earn their living from vast landed endowments and daily earnings performing rituals and religious services at the household and village level. Let us consider turn to how nuns reach the nunnery in the first place.

The Ritual Passage to the Nunnery

The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another...For every one of these events there are ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined⁷.

The three critical rites along the path to full nunhood — tonsure, ordination, and taking a seat at the nunnery — neatly parallel Arnold Van Gennep’s and Victor Turner’s classic schema of separation, transition, and reintegration. Tonsure separates a young girl from a licentious and libidinous adolescence. Ordination emphasizes the transition from fertility to celibacy, and from worldliness to asceticism. Finally membership in the nunnery marks a certain reintegration as a nun moves into

⁷ Van Gennep (1960: 2-3).

a formal monastic fellowship⁸. The order of the second and third stages can be reversed as a nun joins the nunnery before ordination, as a probationer. In this case, her probationary status substitutes for ordination and indicates her acceptance of celibacy and asceticism. Each of these three rites of passage moves a woman irrevocably from one state or stage of life to another. Shaving one's head, adopting robes and vows, and finally joining a religious community for ritual work and study move a woman from one recognized social status to the next. The rites which make a woman into a nun are not simply ceremonial rites which affirm a certain status, but are deeply transformative rites. Although a woman may abandon her vows and robes, she cannot return to her original status as a laywoman and is ineligible to rejoin the monastic order in this lifetime.

Apprenticeship and Tonsure

Although first tonsure marks a ritual moment when a young girl first takes vows of celibacy, she will have been marked for the nun's life years before. When and if a set of parents decide that their daughter is to become a nun, she begins to dress and wear her hair more like a boy than a girl. They will request a distant relative who lives at a nunnery or monastery to accept their daughter as a servant for a winter or two. Most nuns recall these apprenticeships as times of nurturing and care, as kindly old nuns taught them their first letters and textual recitations, stanza by stanza. The teacher and apprentice relation at the nunnery is meant for the most basic literacy requirements, while philosophical explanation is given mainly by monks. Most apprentices spend little time studying, but more time working as servant for their teachers. They may spend several dreary winters performing menial tasks such as fetching water from the streambed, washing dishes, and cleaning their teacher's monastic cell. They begin to participate in the most quotidian aspects of monastic life — attending daily assemblies, hauling water and firewood, and other collective works.

⁸ Compare Lynn Denton's (1991) description of Indian renunciates (*Sannyāsini*) in Banaras who go through three stages — **rejection** of householder life, **commitment** to a particular path of salvation, and **entry** into a community of aspirants.

While their teachers go to the village and work, they may be required to remain reading and memorizing texts from dawn to dusk. They will be pampered by their tutors at the nunnery whose maternal energies belie an eagerness for new recruits.

The youthful initiate who takes tonsure may be known as a *rab 'byung ma* (S. *anagārikā*) literally, “one who has gone forth fully.”⁹ This term harkens back to the original meaning of renunciation as going forth into homelessness. More colloquially, she is called a Genyen, (*dge bsnyen ma*, *upāsikā*) or “virtuous devotee.” Both tonsured initiates and laypeople may take up the same five precepts — avoiding killing, lying, stealing, sexual misconduct, and intoxicants — albeit in rather different ritual contexts. When laypeople take up these five precepts, usually in the context of a Tantric empowerment (*dbang*), they neither shave their heads nor adopt celibacy, as tonsured initiates do. While both laypeople and tonsured initiates repeat the same words, when they vow to “cast off impure actions” (*mi tshang spyod spong ba*), these words have different meanings depending on the ritual context. In general, laypeople are not renouncing the world in the same way that future monastics are. While laypeople easily commit themselves to the five precepts, they break them just as quickly — in many cases as soon as the empowerment is over and the drinking parties begin. For laypeople, taking five precepts signals an intention to be virtuous rather than virtue itself. Indeed, lay precept holders are classed into six types (*dge bsnyen drug*) depending on how many and how strictly the five precepts are held. Strictly speaking, the tonsured candidate should be called *tshangs spyod dge bsnyen*, or chaste devotee. Yet Genyen is also a shorthand for laypeople who observe a ritual abstinence (*bsnyen gnas*) that involves taking eight vows for a single day¹⁰. Such ritual vows, which can be held by either laypeople or monastics

⁹ *Rab 'byung ma* is a condensation of *rab tu 'byung ba* which derives from *rab tu* (thoroughly, fully) and *'byung ba* (go forth, set out). While *dge bsnyen ma* has been defined by Das (1902: 270,511) as “Buddhist devotee”; the term derives from *dge ba* (virtue) and *bsnyen ba* (to receive, admit, worship, or approach).

¹⁰ While the two terms, *bsnyen gnas* and *smyung gnas*, sound similar and are often mistaken, Gutschow (1998, ms) has clarified the entire ritual process of the fasting rite. The eight precepts held during *bsnyen gnas* include: (1) not killing, (2) not lying, (3) not stealing, (4) not committing sexual misconduct, (5) not taking intoxicants, (6) not singing and dancing, (7) not eating after noon, and (8) not using a high or luxurious seat or bed.

may be held on alternate days during a popular Tibetan fasting rite known as Nyungnäs (*smyung gnas*).

Girls with strong religious inclinations may undergo tonsure without their parents' permission or much formal training. Because most questions asked at the tonsure ceremony are asked in the negative, the candidate is asked to speak up if she knows anyone who objects to her taking tonsure. If she has not told her parents, she does not know if they have any objections, strictly speaking. While it is possible to take tonsure without the explicit blessing of one's parents, the initiate requires the tacit acceptance and instruction of at least one monastic in their community. Only monks perform the tonsure rite in Zangskar, although high ranking nuns once performed it in Tibet before 1959¹¹. A quorum of monks is not required, but the officiant must be a fully ordained monk (*dge slong*) who can transmute the rite's latent sexual imagery into a purified Buddhist offering (*mchod pa*). When an initiate requests the monk to shave her head, she may offer him a blessing scarf, some money, or simply some butter for the lamps honoring the local guardian deities. She then undergoes a ritual cleansing ceremony (*khrus*) in which she is cleansed of the mental defilements (*sgrib*) that may have accumulated through her inadvertent actions or ignorance. She will make merit simply by offering her body to the path of renunciation which was the Buddha's main legacy.

The Symbolic Significance of Hair

To cut the hair is to separate oneself from the previous world; to dedicate the hair is to bend oneself to the sacred world...¹².

Although the ritual moment of tonsure happens quickly, its consequences and significance are deep and lasting. Tonsure signals a lifelong intention to remain celibate and reject the call of sexual desire. The initiate is transformed from a potentially fertile and sexual woman into a voluntarily infertile and somewhat asexual woman. At the same time it is a form of disciplinary control by which the apprentice is brought under the

¹¹ Havnevik (1998) reports that nuns may administer hair-cutting rites in Tibet.

¹² Van Gennep, 1960: 166.

monastic gaze. Over the next few years, the initiate comes under probation as her parents and her tutors at the nunnery consider whether if she has sufficient inclination for the spiritual life.

Hair is a potent symbol of sexuality; its removal signifies a turning away from femininity and fecundity. When a young woman shaves off her braids whose length and glossiness are considered to index her fertility, their absence is mourned inwardly but not publicly. Braiding the hair is one of those events that bond young agemates. Yet unlike brides, who cry hysterically for up to three days before their wedding night, nuns have pointedly told me that they do not cry when their heads are first shaven. The recognition that monasticism will free them from marriage makes tonsure a liberating if not joyful experience for most nuns I interviewed. The actual cutting of hair (*skra phud phul*) has both symbolic and pedagogic import in Zangskar as elsewhere in the Buddhist world. As a sacred substance associated with one of the most sacred parts of the body, the head, shorn hair is also associated with a person's luck (*spar kha*). In order to avoid anyone stepping on the shorn hair and thereby destroying one's luck, a nun shoves the shorn hair into the chinks of her cell or hides it under a rock¹³.

Unlike in Sri Lanka, where hair is used as vehicle for meditation upon impermanence, in Zangskar, tonsure is a means to reflect upon the renunciation of desire. There have been many interpretations of the symbolic significance of shaving the head. While some scholars have placed tonsure under the rubric of "ceremonial mutilation," along with circumcision, blood-letting, and cutting off finger joints, others have seen a link between tonsure and castration¹⁴. The Freudian analysis is somewhat reductionist and does not account for the Buddhist emphasis on

¹³ The Sherpas in Nepal toss hair, old clothes, and amulets into trees, so that nobody steps over them, as Adams (1999) notes. The concept that one's luck (*spar kha*) resides in physical substances like hair or clothes is related to the Indian notion of bodily substances which are transacted between individuals as Marriot (1989, 1991) notes. Van Gennep (1960: 166) describes that in most tonsure rites, the shorn hair may be "buried, burned, saved in a sachet, or placed in a relative's keeping," because it is associated with aspects of personality.

¹⁴ Scholars who discuss the symbolic import of hair include Tylor (1873), Berg (1951), Leach (1958), Hershman (1974), Obeyesekere (1981), Lang (1995), and Elberg-Schwartz and Doniger (1995).

liberation rather than castration. Hallpike (1969) has analyzed tonsure as a form of disciplinary control by which individuals are brought under institutional control, noting that monks, soldiers, and convicts all wear shorn hair. Yet the cultural significance of hair and its removal may vary considerably. In the Indian context alone, tonsure signifies mourning for Rajput Hindus, unacceptable renunciation for Punjabi Sikhs, and lifelong monasticism for Zangskari Buddhists. For both Buddhist and Catholic nuns, hair expresses a dangerous female sexuality. Yet the Buddhist aims to sever desire at the root while the Catholic tradition attempts to repress it into oblivion. While tonsure signals total severance from the worldly life in the Theravādin context, there is much more fluidity between the householder and ascetic realms in Zangskar.

Tonsure and Androgyny

The liminal is neither this nor that and yet it is both... Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between¹⁵.

In Zangskar, tonsured girls who have not yet taken ordination remain at home working on the family estate. These apprentice nuns participate fully in village life and owe their primary obligations to their household, even as they begin to apprentice themselves to the nunnery and apply themselves to the study of Buddhist texts. While such apprentices may continue to slip in and out of their obligations to the village and the nunnery, they know they are pledged to a life of renunciation. Even if their parents delay their ordination in order to keep them at home for chores, further renunciation awaits inevitably.

They cannot wear monastic robes but begin to abandon certain markers of femininity. They may wear the upper shawl (*gzan gos*) which all nuns must wear at monastic functions even though they cannot wear full robes until ordination. Rather than the plump and pleated dresses with the embroidered triangles of red and green and the swishing tie-dye shawl (*ling zed*) which every Zangskari girl owns, they don a boyish coat (*gon che*). Their ears and necks no longer drip with corals,

¹⁵ V. Turner (1967: 99, 1969: 95) describes the ambiguity of the liminal state.

turquoises, and pearls which mother's give to their daughters at an early age. Their boyish clothes and close cropped hair signal a liminal status betwixt and between genders. They are both girls and not girls. They may perform the same chores as their girlfriends, but they are no longer marked for marriage and maternity. They may still go to the water pipe to fetch water for her mother, but they may no longer flirt and gossip. Although their five precepts do not prevent them from attending the biannual parties (*chang dud*) of their village agemates, they must keep a restrained etiquette. They may serve but not drink the barley beer; they may play the drum but not sing or dance the romantic songs which they have memorized since youth. They may stay at these parties for days and nights, but cannot sneak off for a secret tryst in the village fields as the other girls do. They will watch as romances are kindled and then quickly smothered by parents busily negotiating marriages on behalf of their daughters. Over the next years, they learn to be nuns by unlearning the feminine graces they have cultivated up to this point. They must maintain an inward purity (*gtsang ma*) in the midst of the worldly dramas which unfold around her and in which they can play little part.

The initiate is separated from her agemates intellectually, as she begins to study classical Tibetan and the initial ritual texts that every nun must learn. She must show special aptitude for mastering the grammar and syntax of an archaic language she neither speaks nor understands, as the West Tibetan dialect spoken in Zangskar differs markedly from the classical Tibetan of religious texts. She begins to memorize texts whose esoteric meanings may only become clear after many years of practice and study¹⁶. By the time she takes novice ordination, she will have begun to study many of the prayers she will have to recite or read every day after she joins the monastic assembly (i.e. *rGyal sras lhag*

¹⁶ Such texts may include the Diamond Sutra (*rDo rje mchod pa*), Heart Sutra (*Shes rab snying po*), and Offering to the Lama (*bLa ma mchod pa*) as well as a local text known as The Jewel of Essential Teachings [in] Zangskar (*Zangs dkar bslab bya snying gi nor bu*) which was authored by Gra sgom Rin po che (1992). It includes prayers for the long life of the Dalai Lama, Panchen Lama, Ngari Rinpoche, and other venerated Zangskari teachers. The other texts are famous examples of Buddhist literature, translated by Lopez (1996, 1997), Conze (1954), Dalai Lama (1998), and Berzin (1979).

len, ‘Dus ‘khor smon lam, *Phyag drug pa’i stod pa*, *Phul ‘byung ma*, *Tshe med yon tan*). More importantly, she begins to imitate her teacher’s daily devotions and religious meditations. Every night and morning, she goes to her teacher’s chapel, where she will learn to light a butter lamp, fill and empty the seven offering bowls with water from left to right, and perform a perfunctory set of three prostrations. These habitual practices will become involuntary by the time she learns to dedicate the merit earned thereby towards all sentient beings with the ‘mind of enlightenment or ‘Bodhicitta’.

The apprentice nun will also take a more active role in the communal chores at the nunnery, helping the cook prepare the daily service of butter tea and going to the roof to bring down huge bushels of prickly thorn that serve as fuel in the monastic hearth. She may be sent to the mountainside to collect dung and thistles for fuel or to limestone deposits high up the scree slopes above the village where chalk is gathered before whitewashing the nunnery compound and religious reliquaries (*mchod rten*) each year. She will be asked to lug huge cans of water from the frozen streambed after chopping a hole in the ice all winter and to attend the springtime work parties where the monastic grounds are repaired after the rigors of winter. In short, she will learn the multitude of chores which attend a communal living arrangement of twenty women. By the time she joins the nunnery, the seasonal cycle of mundane duties will be all too familiar, leaving her free to focus on more esoteric knowledges.

Novice Ordination: A Ritual and its Aftermath

Ordination as a novice (*dge tshul ma*) is the moment when a woman dedicates her life to the monastic discipline she has been learning to embody. The ordination ceremony prepares her to take up full membership at the nunnery as it severs her from her lay friends in the village. Until this moment her vows have been temporary, yet through ordination they become permanent. Unlike in the Theravādin tradition where young men come and go from the monastery, in the Tibetan tradition ordination is an irreversible rite which cannot be undone in this lifetime. Even if when novices abandons their vows, they can never rejoin the

monastic order in this lifetime¹⁷. Although the Vinaya dictates that nuns be ordained twice, first by monks and then by nuns, there is no quorum of fully ordained nuns in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition qualified to act as officiants. As a result, most nuns in the Tibetan tradition are ordained in generic ceremonies open to nuns and monks. While nuns have begun taking ordination from Taiwanese and Korean nuns, the validity of these ordinations is not yet clear.¹⁸ Because it is difficult to find senior monks willing and able to perform such ordinations, nuns may wait years or have to travel on lengthy pilgrimages to find a place in an ordination ceremony. There have been few first hand accounts of an ordination ritual in Tibetan Buddhism, because lay observers are excluded from this rite unlike in the Theravada tradition. The translations and comparisons of the precepts held by fully ordained nuns have added philological depth to our understanding of how the Vinaya varies across sects but little in the way of thick description of the ordination ritual¹⁹. My account relies on several first person accounts of novice ordination ceremonies held in Kashmir.

¹⁷ A liturgy for the full ordination rite from the Dharmagupta lineage notes that a monastic who commits one of the Four Root Downfalls (*S. Pārājika*) is like “a man who having his head cut off cannot come to life; a tree with dead root cannot be alive again; a needle cannot be used without a head; nor a broken rock can come back to its original shape anymore.” Thanks to Sarah Levine for supplying this m.s..

¹⁸ The debate about re-establishing the full ordination tradition in South Asia is discussed in Bartholomeusz (1992, 1994), Gombrich and Obeyesekere (1988), Tsomo (1988, 1996). Tsomo (1996) reports that there are over one hundred western women who have taken ordination from Dharmagupta lineage holders in the last decade.

¹⁹ Gutschow (1998, 2000a) relies on interviews with nuns for the only first hand descriptions of novice ordination for nuns in the Tibetan tradition. Li (2000) describes Thurman (1995: 128-14) has translates Tibetan ordination manuals, Dagpa, Tsering, and Chopel (1975) describe the vows and discipline held by male novices in the Tibetan tradition, and Tsering and Russell (1986) describe the vows held by female precept holders, novices, and probationers. Heirman (1997) translates the novice, probationary, and full ordination vows held by nuns in the Dharmagupta tradition from a Chinese text. Hirakawa (1982), Roth (1970), Kabilsingh (1985, 1998), and Tsomo (1998) translate the Bhiksuni Pratimoksha using Sanskrit, Chinese, and Pali sources. For the Theravādin tradition, compare Bartholomeusz’ (1994) illustration of an ordination ceremony for female renunciates (*dasa sil mata*) and Salgado’s (1996) description of the education of renunciates in Sri Lanka. Tambiah (1968, 1985) and Spiro (1982: 234-54) have sketched Theravādin ordination rites for monks, which lay observers are invited to attend, unlike the Mahāyāna ceremonies which are closed to laypeople.

On the day of the ordination, a nun washes her body and has her head freshly shorn. She may wear the robes and carry the monastic seating rug (*gding ba*) which she may have borrowed from relatives at the monastery. In border regions such as Tibet, a quorum of six fully ordained monks including the preceptor (*mnga' ba*) is required to officiate an ordination. After a ritual purification (*khrus*) using blessed saffron water stored inside a sacred vessel (*bum pa*), candidates receive a brief teaching on the novice precepts. The candidates are asked to repent the innumerable transgressions they have committed in this and previous lifetimes. The preceptor then asks the initiates a series of questions to determine their qualifications for ordination²⁰. The questions are read out and silence indicated assent. The candidates were required to be beholden to neither spouse nor king, to be neither slave nor concubine, neither demon nor deity, but free and fully human. Interestingly, they are not questioned about their motivation, education, previous occupation, or family background. The Buddha allowed lower caste women, dissatisfied wives, and even ex-prostitutes to join the order. Yet even today, women from the lowest caste (*rigs ngan*) are excluded from ordination in Zangskar. As one nun put it pithily, "If the blacksmith sits at the head of the row as chantmaster, where will we sit?" In other words, it was impossible for her to imagine a blacksmith sitting in a monastic assembly because they would be ignoring the seating orders which obtain in Kashmir and elsewhere in the Indian and Nepalese Himalaya.

Before the close of the ritual, the candidates for ordination are called up in front of the officiant and preceptor to answer the last two

²⁰ An ordination manual from the Dharmagupta lineage lists the following 13 major obstacles: (1) having committed one of the Four Root Downfalls, (2) having defiled a nun, (3) having received precepts through deceit, (4) apostasy, (5) being not fully female, (6) having committed patricide, (7) having committed matricide, (8) having killed an Arhat, (9) having caused a schism in the Sangha, (10) having shed the blood of the Buddha, (11) being non-human, (12) being an animal, and (13) not having proper male and female characteristics. The ten minor hindrances are: (1) not knowing one's name, (2) not knowing the name of one's proposer, (3) being under the age of 20, (4) not having the three robes and an almsbowl, (5) the disapproval of one's mother or father, (6) being in debt, (7) being a slave, (8) holding a government post, (9) having neither male nor female characteristics, (10) having one of the five sicknesses (leprosy, epilepsy, retardation, exzema, and manic depression). Compare Horner's (1930: 140-51) list of ten minor obstructions for the Pali canon and Wijayaratna (1990: 120-21).

questions — their name and the name of their preceptor. The candidates offer their blessing scarves on the officiant's throne and placed a small handful of sweetened barley dough and sweet rice (*'bras sil*) into the replica of the Buddha's begging bowl. The candidates then placed one hand on top of the begging bowl and one below the begging bowl, around the shaft of the ritual staff (*mkhar gsil*) to consecrate the initiates²¹. He gave each candidate his blessing (*byin labs*) by pinching the three types of sacred robes they were wearing — the *gzan gos*, *sham thabs*, and *chos gos* — between his fingers and reciting a brief prayer²². As one monk explained, when the officiant pinches or may even tie his own robes to the new novice's robes, he is symbolizing the unbroken lineage of the Buddha's teachings which the monastic discipline represents. The ceremony is concluded when the candidate return to their seats and recite the vows that all novices are bound to observe, after the officiant²³.

Ordination, Liminality, and Discipline

It is as though [initiates] are being reduced or ground down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers to cope with their new station in life²⁴.

The ordination exemplifies both ritual liminality and bodily discipline as described by both Turner (1969: 106) and Asad (1993). Ritual obedience is expected, as are other key traits and practices: acceptance of pain and suffering, simplicity, sacred instruction, silence, unselfishness, total obedience (to the required sacred formula), sexlessness, anonymity,

²¹ Das (1902: 143) relates this ritual staff which is used by priests during the dedication of merit (*sngo ba*) during alms gathering with a close cognate, *khar gsel*, "the trident carried by mendicants of the *sngags kyi theg pa* Tantrik school." The trident is a symbol of Vishnu, one of whose epithets is *khar sa pa ni* in Tibetan. Waddell (1895: 211) shows a drawing of this ritual staff.

²² Tsomo (1996: 163-4) describes the necessity of blessing of the robes.

²³ In the Mūlasarvāstivādin canon, novice vows are listed in an abbreviated version of ten vows or the full list of 36 vows. The abbreviated list is similar to the ten precepts held by female renunciates (*Dasa sil mata*) in Sri Lanka and the eight or ten precepts held by renunciates (*Thila shin*) in Burma. In the Dharmagupta tradition, novices also take the Bodhisattva vow during their ordination ceremony, while Tibetan novices take this vow in the course of Tantric initiations.

²⁴ Turner, 1969: 95.

homogeneity, equality, uniform clothing, disregard for personal appearance and wealth, suspension of kinship rights, and mystical powers. Initiates must remain silent as the questions concerning disqualification are read out, for silence indicates assent and thereby qualification for the monastic vocation. They are accepting pain and suffering as they take vows to fast, maintain lifelong celibacy, and eschew any romantic or sentimental attachments to members of the opposite sex. Total obedience is enjoined, as the officiant explains the vows and their meaning. To break any one of the vows even in thought is equivalent to a breach of contract, while breaking one of the four root vows (*rtsa lhung bzhi*) involves immediate expulsion from the monastic order. Anonymity and sexlessness are expressed by the uniform maroon robes. The initiates are enjoined to disregard personal vanity and wealth as several of their 36 novice vows expressly forbid adornments, makeup, body-paint, perfume, saffron, and flowers, as well as gold and silver.

When the head officiant calls the novices in front of him to bless the robes, he reminds them of the ritual sanctity and significance of the vows they are about to take. The act of repeating the vows after him is a performative act, in which saying is doing, as Tambiah (1985) calling on Austin (1962) notes. During the rite, the novices receive sacred instruction and *sacra* — vows and robes — which have been forbidden up until this moment. Although a novice receives instructions about the form and flow of the rite, ordination may the first time she recites the 36 novice vows. In the heightened state of ordination, their reading cannot but have a lasting effect. As Leach (1966) suggests, ritual is an information storage system, in which highly condensed forms of knowledge are transmitted to the next generation of practitioners. In Tibetan Buddhism, ritual operates as a condensed information storage system *par excellence*, as the most esoteric and secret forms of knowledge are only transmitted orally from teacher to pupil. This method allows the teacher to evaluate if the student is ready to receive the ritual information, in short, if they have completed the necessary meditations and other austerities. Students of Tantra may only be permitted to study advanced texts or visualization techniques after having received the oral explanation (*lung bstan*) of the text or practice from a qualified teacher. This practice ensured that male teachers controlled the most esoteric ritual practices and knowledges,

while disciplining the student's bodies and minds in the period of apprenticeship.

Joining the Monastic Assembly

Ordination ushers in a monastic discipline which demands perseverance and precocity. Most nuns try to join the assembly of nuns as soon as possible after becoming ordained, although they may also reverse these two stages of the ritual process and ordain later due to a lack of ordination ceremonies being held in remote Zangskar. The process of joining the nunnery, or in colloquial idiom, 'dwelling on the cliff' (*ri la bzhugs byes*) involves petitioning the abbot with a thermos of butter tea and a blessing scarf, a procedural formality. Although the parents and prospective nun are nervous, the community of nuns and their abbot usually welcomes new members. Although any nun who objects to a petitioner's entrance to the monastic community may register her doubts, objections are rare. There is no entrance examination nor even a set of ritual practices which must be mastered by this time. Yet the years of apprenticeship at the nunnery have given the other nuns enough opportunities to judge a prospective nun's dedication and potential. On a day specified in advance, the prospective nun and her parents come to the nunnery bearing butter, salt, a basket of breads for the assembly of nuns, and enough money to make a small donation to the assembly. The prospective nun will help the cook make the tea before she is ushered into the assembly hall with her parents.

After prostrating three times to the altar, the prospective nun places offers blessing scarves before taking her place at the end of the seating order of nuns, in her new role as the junior most member of the assembly. Her parents, as lay people, are accommodated on separate cushions laid out against the rear wall of the hall. When tea and breads are served to each nun, the parents must refuse vociferously, although they may drink a single cup of tea out of politeness. This initial "Vinaya tea" (*'dul ja*) symbolizes the new nun's formal entrance into the assembly of nuns. The play of exchange continues to unfold. After removing a wad of small notes, the parents ask one of the nuns serving the tea to distribute a small monetary donation (*'gyed*) to each nun. The abbot replies with a short

speech of thanks. The parents then receive blessing scarves and a blessing cord from the head nun on behalf of the entire assembly. As thanks for receiving a new member, the parents are given a small payment called *stong deb* of 14 Rs²⁵. The sum is a symbolic replacement for the daughter they have lost. When the parents feel it is appropriate, they leave the hall and retire to the guest room where they can drink more tea in comfort. They may move to the private rooms of an elderly nun who was their daughter's tutor or instructor, where they host a small party for friends and relatives. Until they build a cell for their daughter, she may continue to live with her tutor, while learning the rules of life at the nunnery.

After she joins the monastic assembly, a nun is expected to complete the memorization of all essential texts which are recited during the monthly and annual ritual sessions or festivals. Villagers occasionally request nuns to perform incidental rituals such as prayers for the deceased, the ill, blessings for a journey, and the removal of obstacles. Unlike monks who make a living performing expiatory and propitiatory rituals, nuns are usually only called into local households for two life cycle rites, weddings and funerals. Yet even at these two rituals, monks dominate the ritual process. While both assemblies (*samghas*) of nuns and monks are invited to chant at funerals, only monks are permitted to perform the ritual transfer of the body from this world to the next (*cho ga*) until the cremation, which again is only officiated by monks. At weddings, only monks may conduct the bride's ritual transference (*gyang 'gugs*) from her natal clan to her husband's clan as well as the ritual destruction of the effigy (*zor*) which prevents demons (*rgyab 'dre*) and malicious gossip (*gnod pa, mi kha*) from following her to her new husband's home. Nuns also attend several village festivals like the springtime ancestor ritual (*rgyas tsha*) and the circumambulation of the fields (*'bum skor*). At the first rite, while both assemblies make merit for the deceased, only monks officiate the construction and consecration of tiny votive chorten (*tsha tsha*) which symbolize the bodies of the deceased. At the springtime circumambulation (*'bum skor*), both assemblies are called to read the Prajnaparamita,

²⁵ French (1995: 110-14) offers a fascinating discussion of the concept of death payments, also known as *stong*, which are compensation payments to the family or relatives of a person who has been murdered. French (m.s.) presents a more detailed discussion of the sixth section of the dGa' ldan Pho brang Law Code.

but monks perform the ritual ablutions (*khrus*) which cleanse the crops and village space.

Once she joins the assembly, a nun is expected to take up a number of ritual offices which rotate among the member nuns according to seniority. Each nun serves as conch blower (*dung ma*), ritual assistant (*chos g.yog*), sacristan (*dkon gnyer*), assistant chant master (*dbu chung*), and chant master (*dbu mdzad*) which doubles as head nun. Each of these positions involve a three-year tenure, except that of sacristan. The office of ritual assistant carries the responsibility for making all of the dough and butter sculptures, as well as offering cakes, and other aspects of the ritual altar for any and all rites performed in the nunnery. During her tenure she cannot stray far from the nunnery, although there are two nuns who fill this post and substitute for each other when one is busy with village work. The main ingredients of these sculptures (butter, roasted barley flour, milk, beer, buttermilk, yogurt, saffron and other ritual spices) are provided by the sponsoring villager. While the food items are provided by the sponsor, the ritual assistant herself must procure the powders or special spices (such as *bzang drug*) necessary for esoteric rites. She also serves as caretaker for all of the nunnery's ritual items: the colored powders for dyeing butter sculptures, the wooden relief block and orange-powder used to create a Mandala dedicated to the nunnery's protective deity, plates for tossing *gtor ma*, butter lamps and offering bowls, and other assorted tools necessary for setting up the ritual altars. The sacristan or door-keeper must go at dawn and dusk to the assembly hall to light and later refill butter lamps, to fill and empty offering bowls, and to offer a litany of sounds and smells to the protective spirits — juniper incense, a ritual shake of the bell (*dril bu*), the hand drum (*cang te'u*), and a quick crescendo of beats on large drum (*rnga*).

The most important post at Karsha nunnery is that of chant master (*dbu mdzad*) or head nun. Every nun must take her turn in this position, after she has completed all the other positions at the nunnery. For three years prior to being head nun, she apprentices herself as assistant chant master (*dbu chung*) as she memorizes the chants and other rules of nunnery life. By the time the three years are up, she will have memorized nearly 20 hours worth of ritual texts which she can recite on call. In Zangskar, the head nun does more than lead the assembly rituals, she is a CEO,

principal shareholder, and office manager of the nuns' corporation²⁶. She is in charge of the nunnery's finances, resources, works and projects, ritual calendar, and annual investments and expenditures. She must keep track of every Rupee that goes in or out of the monastic coffers as well as record the manner in which it was spent. When necessary, she even cooks the tea and prepares the meal requested by a donor sponsoring a rite, before leading the necessary chants at the same rite. She is the unofficial arbitrator of all internal politics and complaints registered by her fellow nuns. However, at most nunneries, the ultimate adjudication of disputes as well as any disciplinary measures are decided by the abbot or a unanimous vote of the nunnery assembly (*dge 'dun*).

Every nun who is a member of the assembly owes a certain amount of labor as well as material resources to the collective, which cover the operating costs of the nunnery as institution. At Karsha nunnery in Zangskar for instance, every nun under 60 years of age must bring four to five loads of thistle wood and firewood, and two loads of dung. Every nun is also required to attend between 20 and 30 collective work days, announced by the head nun for maintenance chores. There is much work, even at such a small institution. The nunnery path is repaired after winter snowfall and avalanches. The nunnery buildings, walls, chorten, and compound are repaired and whitewashed each spring. The willow grove and gardens are weeded, watered, and tilled. The water pipe is disassembled each fall before the first heavy frost and reinstalled each spring, and the snow must be shoveled off the roofs of all the nunnery buildings, to prevent leaking and collapsed roofs. The nunnery compost toilet is emptied and the manure (mixed with ashes and earth) is carried to the nunnery garden and fields. Until 1998 when the fields were sharecropped to local villagers, the nuns were expected to provide a certain amount of work on the nunnery's two fields, sowing the seeds, performing the "first watering", weeding, harvesting, threshing, winnowing, carrying the grain and chaff to the nunnery, and finally washing, drying, and roasting the grain. Three nuns known as "field managers"

²⁶ Tibetan nunneries in Dharmasala may have more variegated offices, including treasurers, stewards, and other positions for handling the business side of the nunnery. At most Zangskari nunneries, there are one or two stewards (*gnyer pa*) who handle the foreign donations; however, the head nun must manage the local, Zangskari donations.

(*zhing gi gnyer pa*) were responsible for coordinating the agricultural tasks throughout the summer.

Despite the drudgery of monastic work, monasticism still represent modernity for many Zangskari women. The monastic vocation is one avenue of escape from lifelong drudgery as a housewife or mother in a non-mechanized rural economy. The religious life remains a vocational opportunity which offers women relative freedom to pursue study and contemplation. Most Zangskari nuns have little access to secular or religious education, unlike Sri Lanka where a nuns enroll in state-sponsored education before becoming school teachers or meditation trainers²⁷. Until now, no single Zangskari nuns have become public teachers although most senior nuns offer religious instruction through to their apprentices or disciples. Foreign initiatives in the last decade established senior monks (*dge bshes*) at two of Zangskar's nine nunneries, who were supposed to teach dialectics following the Tibetan monastic curriculum. While the foreign sponsors provided monthly stipends for these two venerable monks without fail, the educational outcome was less than favorable. These well-intentioned schemes simply did not take into account the tremendous pressure the nuns face from their families and relatives to work at home. There is also some local backlash as some nuns have privately suggested that these feminist initiatives expect too much too fast. Local villagers have voiced incredulity at these efforts, and have mocked the nuns for studying abstract philosophy. They have said that they will no longer need to call nuns for funerals because what kind of soul would want to be guided through the bardo by the cacaphony of dialectics? Yet for many young women, the nunnery and its religious education remains the best opportunity for a career as well as the freedom to make merit single mindedly in hopes of a better rebirth the next time around.

Aknowledgements

I would like to thank the nuns of Karsha and other nuns in Zangskar for their infinite patience and boundless compassion, as well as more cups

²⁷ According to Salgado (1996), 6% of Sri Lanka's 3000 female renunciates were registered in state-sponsored religious training. Bartholomeusz (1994) describes the Buddhist schools for girls established during the Buddhist revival in the late 19th century.

of tea than I can ever hope to repay in this lifetime. Deep thanks to Michael Aris, to whom this article is dedicated, and also to Manduhai Buyandelgeriyn, Erika Evas-Dottier, Arthur Kleinman, Sarah Levine, Ashok Rai, Stanley Tambiah, Nur Yalman, and Jan Willis for helpful conversations. Funding for research in Zangskar between 1991 and 1997 came from the Jacob Javitz Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, and Harvard's Department of Anthropology. Italics refer to Tibetan, using the Wylie system of transliteration.

Bibliography

Austin, J.L.

1962 *How To Do Things With Words*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Aziz, Barbara

1976 Views From the Monastery Kitchen. *Kailash* 4(2): 155-67.

1988 Women In Tibetan Society and Tibetology. *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 4th Seminar of the I.A.T.S.*. Helga Übach and Jampa Panglung, eds. Pp. 25-34. München: Kommission Für Zentralasiatische Studien, Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften.

1989 Buddhist Nuns. *Natural History* 98(3): 41-8.

Barnes, Nancy

1987 *Buddhism. In Women in World Religions*. Arvind Sharma, ed. Pp. 105-133. Albany: SUNY Press.

1996 Women in Buddhism. In *Today's Women in World Religions*. Arvind Sharma, ed. Pp. 137-70. Albany: SUNY Press.

Bartholomeusz, Tessa

1992 The Female Mendicant in Sri Lanka. In *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender*. Jose Cabezon, ed. Pp. 37-64. Albany: SUNY Press.

1994 *Women Under the Bo Tree: Buddhist Nuns in Sri Lanka*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Berg, Charles

1951 *The Unconscious Significance of Hair*. London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.

Berzin, Alexander, trans.

1979 *Bla ma mchod pa [Guru Puja]*. by Pan chen bLo bzang Chos kyi rGyal btsan. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.

Bourdieu, Pierre

1977 *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

1980 *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Campbell, June

1996 *Traveler in Space: In Search of Female Identity in Buddhism*. New York: George Braziller.

Conze, Edward

1954 *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages*. New York: Philosophical Library.

Crook, John and Henry Osmaston

1994 *Himalayan Buddhist Villages*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Dalai Lama

1988 *The Union of Bliss and Emptiness: A Commentary on the Lama Choepa Guru Yoga Practice*. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications.

Dargay, Eva and Lobsang Dargay

1980 Vorläufiger Bericht Über Zwei Forschungsreisen Nach Zangskar (West-Tibet). *Zentralasiatische Studien*. 14(2): 85-114.

1987 The Dynasty of Bzang-la (Zangskar, West Tibet) and Its Chronology: A Reconsideration. In *Silver on Lapis: Tibetan Literary Culture and History*. Christopher Beckwith, ed. Pp.13-32. Bloomington: The Tibet Society.

1988 Buddhism in Adaptation: Ancestor Gods and Their Tantric Counterparts in the Religious Life of Zangskar. *History of Religions* 28(2): 123-134.

Das, Sarat Chandra

1902 *A Tibetan-English Dictionary*. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot.

Dentaletche, Claude, ed.

1985 *Ladakh, Himalaya Occidental: Ethnologie, ecologie*. Pau: Acta Biologica Montana.

Diener, Michael, and Franz-Karl Erhard, Kurt Friedrichs, and Ingrid Fischer-Schreiber, eds.

1994 *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion*. Boston: Shambhala.

Doniger, Wendy

1995 Put a Bag Over Her Head: Beheading Mythological Women. In *Off With Her Head: The Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture*. H. Eilberg-Schwartz and W. Doniger, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Dollfus, Pascale

1989 *Lieu de neige et de genévriers: organisation sociale et religieuse des communautés bouddhistes du Ladakh*. Paris: CNRS.

Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard.

1995 Introduction: The Spectacle of the Female Head. In *Off With Her Head: The Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture*.

- H. Eilberg-Schwartz and W. Doniger, eds. Pp. 1-14. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Falk, Nancy
 1980 The Case of the Vanishing Nuns: The Fruits of Ambivalence in Ancient Buddhism. In *Unspoken Worlds: Women's Religious Lives in Non-Western Cultures*. Nancy Falk and Rita Gross, eds. Pp. 207-24. New York: Harper and Row.
- Frazer, James
 1922 *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. Abridged. London: Macmillan.
- French, Rebecca
 1995 *The Golden Yoke: The Legal Cosmology of Buddhist Tibet*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Friedl, Wolfgang
 1983 *Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft und Materielle Kultur in Zanskar (Ladakh)*. Sankt Augustin: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag.
- Fürer-Haimendorf, Christopher von
 1976 A Nunnery in Nepal. *Kailash* 4(2): 121-54.
- Gellner, David
 1992 *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest: Newar Buddhism and its Hierarchy of Ritual*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gombrich, Richard
 1975 Buddhist Karma and Social Control. *History of Religions* 17(4):212-20.
 1988 *Theravada Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo*. New York: Routledge.
- Gra sgom Rin po che
 1992 *Zangs skar bslab bya sying gi nor bu [The Precious Heart Jewel of Advice for Zangskar]*. Delhi: Jayyed Press.
- Green, Paula
 1987 Buddhist Nuns in Ladakh. In *Recent Research on Ladakh: Proceedings of the 6th International Colloquium on Ladakh*. Henry Osmaston and Ngawang Tsering, eds. Pp. 99-104. Bristol: Bristol University Press.
- Grimshaw, Anna
 1983a *Rizong: A Monastic Community in Ladakh*. Ph.D. Dissertation. Department of Anthropology, Cambridge University.
 1983b Celibacy, Religion, and Economic Activity in a Monastic Community of Ladakh. In *Recent Research on Ladakh: Proceedings of the*

- 1st International Colloquium on Ladakh Studies*. Dieter Kantowsky and Rienhard Sander, eds. Pp. 121-34. Munich: Weltforum Verlag.
- 1992 *Servants of the Buddha: Winter in a Himalayan Convent*. London: Open Letters Press.
- Gross, Rita
- 1989 Yeshe Tsogyel: Enlightened Consort, Great Teacher, Female Role Model. In *Feminine Ground: Essays on Women and Tibet*. Janice Willis, ed. Pp. 11-32. Ithaca: Snow Lion Press.
- 1993 *Buddhism After Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Guenther, Herbert
- 1963 *The Life and Teachings of Naropa*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 1989 *Tibetan Buddhism in Western Perspective*. Berkeley: Dharma Publishing.
- Gutschow, Kim
- 1994 1994 [1995] Reflections From a Nunnery Rooftop. *Ladags Melong* 1(1): 21-3. Reprinted in *Sakyadhita* 6(4): 9-11.
- 1997 Unfocussed Merit Making In Zangskar: A Socio-Economic Account of Karsha Nunnery. *The Tibet Journal* 22(2): 30-58.
- 1998 *An Economy of Merit: Women and Buddhist Monasticism in Zangskar, Northwest India*. Ph.D. Thesis. Department of Anthropology, Harvard University.
- In press. A Novice Ordination in Tibet: The Rhetoric and Reality of Female Monasticism in Zangskar, Northwest India. forthcoming in *Women Changing Contemporary Buddhism*. Ellison Findly, ed. Boston: Wisdom Books.
- Hallpike, C. R.
- 1969 Social Hair. *Man*, n.s. 4: 256-264.
- Havnevik, Hanna
- 1990 *Tibetan Buddhist Nuns*. Oslo: Norwegian University Press.
- 1998 On Pilgrimage for 40 Years in the Himalayas: The Female Lama Jetsun Lochen Rinpoche's (1865-1951) Quest for Sacred Sites. In *Pilgrimage in Tibet*. Alex McKay, ed. Pp. 85-107. London: Curzon Press.
- n.d. Jetsun Ani Lochen's biography or *rnam thar*. Unpublished Manuscript.
- Horner, I.B.
- 1930 *Women Under Primitive Buddhism: Laywomen and Almswomen*. London: George Routledge.
- Kabilsingh, Chatsumarn
- 1984 *A Comparative Study of the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha*. New Delhi: Chaukhambha Orientalia.

- 1998 *The Bhikkhuni Patimokkha of The Six Schools*. New Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications.
- Kaplanian, Patrick
1981 *Les Ladakhis du Cachemire*. Paris.
- Kawanami, Hiroko
1990 The Religious Standing of Burmese Buddhist Nuns (*thila-shin*): The Ten Precepts and Religious Respect Words. *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 13 (1): 17-40.
- Kelsang Gyatso, Geshe
1996 *Guide to Dakini Land: The Highest Yoga Tantra Practice of Buddha Vajrayogini*. London: Tharpa Publications.
- Keyes, Charles and E. Valentine Daniel, eds.
1983 *Karma: An Anthropological Enquiry*. Berkeley: University of Californian Press.
- Klein, Anne
1985 Primordial Purity and the Everyday Life: Exalted Female Symbols and the Women of Tibet. In *Immaculate and Powerful: The Female in Sacred Image and Social Reality*. Clarrissa Atkinson, Constance Buchanan, and Margaret Miles, eds. Pp. 111-38. Boston: Beacon Press.
1995 *Meeting the Great Bliss Queen: Buddhists, Feminists, and the Art of the Self*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Lang, Karen
1995 Shaven Heads and Loose Hair: Buddhist Attitudes Toward Hair and Sexuality. In *Off With Her Head: The Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture*. H. Eilberg-Schwartz and W. Doniger, eds. Pp. 32-52. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Leach, Edmund
1958 Magical Hair. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. 83: 147-64.
1966 Ritualization in Man in Relation to Conceptual and Social Development. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 251: 403-8.
- Levine, Sarah
in press At the Cutting Edge: Theravada Nuns in the Kathmandu Valley. Forthcoming in *Swimming Against the Stream*. ed. by Karma Lekshe Tsomo. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Lopez, Donald
1994 *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- 1996 *Elaborations on Emptiness: Uses of the Heart Sutra*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- 1997 *Religions of Tibet in Practice*. Donald Lopez, ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- 1998 *Prisoners of Shangri-La*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Neufeldt, Ronald
- 1986 *Karma and Rebirth: Post Classical Developments*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Obeyesekere, Gananath
- 1981 *Medusa's Hair: An Essay on Personal Symbol's and Religious Experience*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger.
- 1983 *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Tradition*. New Delhi: Motilal.
- Ortner, Sherry
- 1978 *Sherpas Through Their Rituals*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- 1983 The Founding of the First Sherpa Nunnery and the Problem of 'Women' as an Analytic Category. In *Feminist Re-Visions: What Has Been and Might Be*. V. Patraha and L. Tilly, eds. Pp. 93-134. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Women's Studies Program.
- 1989a *High Religion: A Cultural and Political History of Sherpa Buddhism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- 1989b Cultural Politics: Religious Activism and Ideological Transformation Among 20th Century Sherpas. *Dialectical Anthropology* 14: 197-211.
- 1996 *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Paul, Diana
- 1985 *Women In Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in Mahayana Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Petech, Luciano
- 1977 *A Kingdom of Ladakh*. Rome: Instituto Per ISMEO.
- 1998 Western Tibet: Historical Introduction. In *Tabo A Lamp for the Kingdom: Early Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Art in the Western Himalayas*. Deborah Klimburg-Salter, ed. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Reichenbach, Bruce
- 1990 *The Law of Karma: A Philosophical Study*. London: Macmillan.
- Reis, Ria
- 1983 Reproduction or Retreat: The Position of Buddhist Women in Ladakh. In *Recent Research on Ladakh*. Dieter Kantowsky and Reinhard Sander, eds. Pp. 217-29. München: Weltforum Verlag. Schuh, Dieter

Schuh, Dieter

- 1976 *Urkunden und Zendschreiben aus Zentraltibet, Ladakh, und Zanskar*. Monumenta Tibetica Historica. Band 2,4. St. Augustin: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag.
- 1983 *Historiographische Dokumente aus Zans-dkar*. Sankt Augustin: Archiv für Zentralasiatische Geschichts-Forschung Heft 6.

Riaboff, Isabelle

- 1997 *Le Roi et le Moine: figures et principes de pouvoir et de sa légitimation au Zanskar* (Himalaya Occidental). Ph.D. Thesis, Laboratoire d'ethnologie et de sociologie comparative, Université de Paris X.

Shaw, Miranda

- 1994 *Passionate Enlightenment: Women in Tantric Buddhism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Snellgrove, David and Tadeusz Skorupski

- 1980 *The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh: Zangskar and the Cave Temples of Ladakh*. Warminster: Aris & Phillips.

Spiro, Melford

- 1982 *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Tambiah, Stanley

- 1970 *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults of Northeast Thailand*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1976 *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand Against a Historical Background*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1985 *Culture, Thought, and Social Action: An Anthropological Perspective*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Trungpa, Chögyam

- 1982 Sacred Outlook: The Vajrayogini Shrine and Practice. In *The Silk Route and the Diamond Path: Esoteric Buddhist Art on the Trans-Himalayan Trade Routes*. Deborah Klimburg Salter, ed. Pp. 226-42. Los Angeles: UCLA Art Council.

Tsering, Tashi and Phillipa Russell

- 1986 An Account of The Buddhist Ordination of Women. *Chö Yang*. vol. 1(1): 21-30.

Tsomo, Karma Lekshe

- 1988 *Sakyadhita: Daughters of the Buddha*. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications.

- 1989 Tibetan Ani-s: The Nun's Life In Tibet. In *Feminine Ground: Essays on Women and Tibet*. Jan Willis, ed. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications.
- 1996 *Sisters in Solitude: Two Traditions of Buddhist Monastic Ethics for Women*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Turner, Victor
- 1969 *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Tylor, Edward
- 1873 *Primitive Culture: Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom*. 2nd Edition. London: John Murray.
- Van Gennep, Arnold
- 1960 [1908] *The Rites of Passage: A Classic Study of Cultural Celebrations*. M. Vizedom and M. Caffee, trans. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wheeler, Kate
- 1993 Bowing Not Scraping. *Tricycle* 3(2): 26-32.
- Willis, Jan
- 1985 Nuns and Benefactresses: The Role of Women in the Development of Buddhism. In *Women, Religion, and Social Change*. Yvonne Haddad and Ellison Findly, eds. Pp. 59-85. Albany: SUNY Press.
- 1989 Tibetan Ani-s: The Nun's Life in Tibet. In *Feminine Ground: Essays on Women and Tibet*. Pp. 96-117. Ithaca: Snow Lion Press.
- Zod pa, dGe bshes and Ngag dbang Tshe ring Shags po
- 1979 *Zangs dkar gyi rgyal rabs dang chos 'byung [The Royal Chronicles and Religious History of Zangskar]*. Leh: Ladakh Buddha Vihar.