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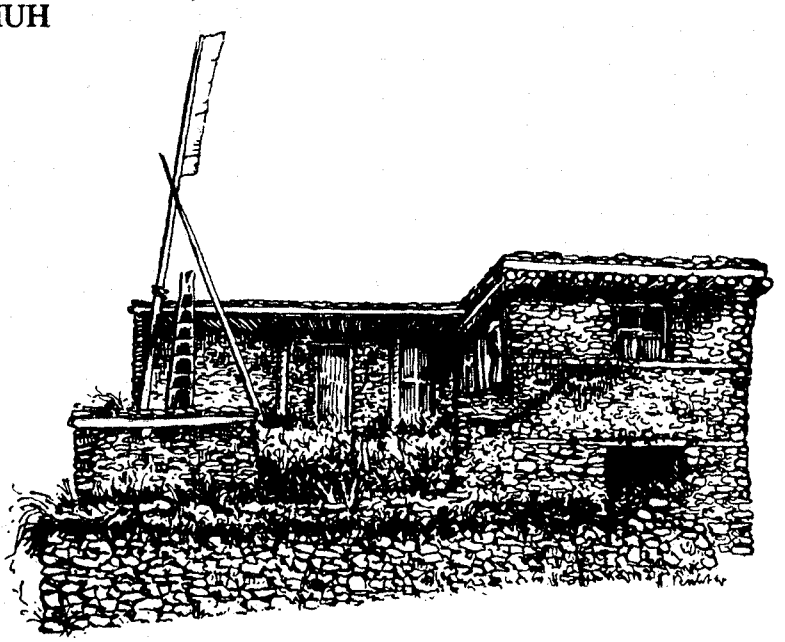

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Observations on the Reform of Buddhism in Nepal*

1. *Introduction*

In November 1986 the general meeting of the "World Fellowship of Buddhists" (W.F.B), i.e. one of the conferences of the Buddhist world community to take place in intervals of two to three years, has taken place for the second time in Kathmandu. Heretofore these conferences have been organized in countries with a majority Buddhist population, if one disregards India and Nepal. Located in India are the sites of the historical Buddha's activity, and in Nepal his birthplace, Lumbini. Neither is a Buddhist country: India is a secular republic with a very small percentage of Buddhists in its population, and Nepal a Hindu kingdom. According to the official statistics of 1981 (whose reliability, however, to judge by the way in which the surveys were carried out, must be characterised as very doubtful), the Buddhist share in Nepal's population amounts to only 5.3 %.

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*We are grateful to Mr. Philip Pierce, M.A., of the Nepal Research Centre in Kathmandu for translating the German text of this contribution into English in the autumn of 1986. - We wish to express our sincere gratitude to the Ven. Theras, Bhikkhus, Anāgārikās and lay members of the Buddhist community for their ever-ready willingness to supply information necessary for our research. Our visits to Nepal in 1986 were made possible through support from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft which was granted within the frame-work of the Nepal Research Program. - After this paper had been translated, a study by David N. Gellner ("Language, Caste, Religion and Territory: Newar identity ancient and modern", *European Journal of Sociology* 27 (1986), pp. 102-148) was kindly made available to us by its author. The chapters 4 ("The history of the Newari language movement", pp. 128-34) and 5 ("The relationship between Buddhism and Newar ethnic identity", pp. 134-37) deal with Theravāda Buddhism in Nepal. Moreover, we are grateful to Mr. Gellner for valuable suggestions which he made after reading our draft and which have been incorporated in the final version of this contribution. - We have used the graphematic transliteration only for bibliographical and terminological informations.

The Buddhists of Nepal are in large preponderance either adherents of the traditional "Newar Buddhism" or adherents of Tibetan Buddhism, all the important schools of which are represented: first and foremost rNiṅ-ma-pa, bKa'-brgyud-pa (in particular, the Karma-pa subgroup), Sa-skya-pa and dGe-lugs-pa. Whereas "Newar Buddhism", belonging to the tradition of Indian Buddhism, has remained limited to the ethnic and linguistic community of Newars, a number of mountain peoples (e.g. Tamangs, Gurungs etc.) other than those belonging to Tibetan-speaking ethnic groups profess themselves to be either completely or partially Tibetan Buddhists. A portion of the Newar population is Hindu.

2. *Traditional Newar Buddhism*

The fact that the spread of traditional Newar Buddhism has remained limited to members of a particular ethnic group has to do with the peculiar structure of this form of religion. Historically, Newar Buddhism is to be grouped in with the tradition of Indian Vajrayāna or Tantric Buddhism, but it has developed its own peculiarities, which are one of a kind in Buddhist history. There are no longer any celibate monastic orders among the Newar Buddhists. Presumably in the 13th or 14th century, rather, the Sangha was transformed into a caste community, i.e. a community one was admitted to not on the basis of a personal decision but by virtue of one's birth. The members of this caste live in "vihāras", which grew out of former monasteries. New *vihāras* of this type, of course, were also founded. The communities which grew out of the previous monastic orders have retained the designation "Sangha".

There are, in fact, two sections or status groups within this caste, namely the "Vajrācāryas" and the "Śākyabhikṣus" (usually called simply "Śākyas"). These designations tie in with their original functions: The Vajrācārya was a "master" of Tantrism, the Śākyabhikṣu a Buddhist monk. The Vajrācāryas figure as the higher of these two sections. Only the male members, who were born into these communities as Vajrācāryas or Śākyabhikṣus and have undergone the appropriate rites of initiation, belong to the Sangha; these non-celibate Sanghas each form a strictly organised *saṅgha-guṭhī*, to which the members of the caste are admitted only by way of the initiatory rite of *bare chuyegu* ("introduction into the host of honourable ones"). This initiation is administered to young boys usually between the

ages of three and thirteen, and represents the ritual act of the *pravrajyā* of monastic Buddhism, out of which it has grown. The boys receive a monk's robe, observe for a limited time the old monastic vows and afterwards lay their robe down. The Vajrācāryas, deemed the highest Buddhist caste, receive additionally the "initiation as spiritual teacher" (*ācāḥ luyegu*, Skt. *ācāryābhiṣeka*), by virtue of which they are introduced to the secrets of the Vajrayāna ritual; if they are delinquent in this, their offspring are looked upon as Śākyas. The Vajrācāryas are the actual ritual specialists of Newar Buddhism.

The other completely or partially Buddhistic castes, such as the Pradhān (a subgroup of the Śreṣṭhas), Tulādhar or Mānandhar, remain excluded from these Sangha communities, even if they do take part in the Buddhistic cult and contribute to the upkeep of temples. The regular *pūjā* as well as the religious festivals are open to everyone. By contrast, the *āgaṃcheṃ*, the shrine of the Tantric deity, may be entered only by those Newars who have submitted themselves to a further Tantric initiation (*dīkṣā*, New. *dekhā*); apart from members of the Vajrācārya section, Śākyas, Śreṣṭas and Urāy may also be admitted to the *dīkṣā*. Rituals and readings from the sacred texts in Sanskrit and classical Newari are carried out by Vajrācāryas and, to a limited extent, Śākyabhkiṣus.

This traditional Buddhism of the Newars has recently become the subject of detailed studies by Siegfried Lienhard, John K. Locke and others, to which we may refer here.[1] Although some observers prophesied as early as

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1. Siegfried Lienhard, "Nepal: the Survival of Indian Buddhism in a Himalayan Kingdom", *The World of Buddhism*, ed. Heinz Bechert and Richard Gombrich, London 1984, pp. 1o8-114; ibid. p. 294 for further references; S. Lienhard, "Buddhistisches Gemeindeleben in Nepal", *Zur Schulzugehörigkeit von Werken der Hīnayāna-Literatur* (Symposien zur Buddhismusforschung III,1) ed. Heinz Bechert, Göttingen 1985 (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen 149), pp. 261-274; John K. Locke, "Newar Buddhist Initiation Rites", *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* 2.2 (1975), pp. 1-23; John K. Locke, "Present-Day Buddhism in Nepal", *Buddhism in the Modern World*, ed. H. Dumoulin, New York 1976, pp. 294-3o1; John K. Locke, *Karunamaya, The Cult of Avalokitesvara-Matsyendranath in the Valley of Nepal*, Kathmandu 198o; John K. Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, A Survey of the Bāhās and Bahīs of the Kathmandu Valley*, Kathmandu 1985; Michael Allen, "Buddhism without Monks: the Vajrayana Religion of the Newars of Kathmandu Valley", *South Asia* 2 (1972), pp. 1-14; Stephen Greenwold, "Monkhood versus Priesthood in Newar Buddhism", *Contributions to the Anthropology of*

the last century the swift disappearance of this form of religion, it has proved to be remarkably durable, an important factor in its conservation being the close tie between religious practice and social structure. A new self-representation of the traditional Buddhism, written by Badri R. Bajracharya, was distributed during the W.F.B. Conference in Kathmandu in 1986.[2]

3. *Starting points of the reform*

Traditional Newar Buddhism has considerable weaknesses. Among these, in particular, is the rather complete lack of a living doctrinal tradition. The Vajrācāryas and Śākyabhikṣus are ritual specialists, who perform in some cases very complicated ceremonies and know the texts for them, but most of them are not persons knowledgeable in Buddhist teaching who might be able to explain the meaning of those rituals and texts. Preaching and propagating of doctrine are largely unknown in their form of religion. In addition, the performance of many of these rituals entails considerable monetary expenditure. The restriction of important initiatory rituals to members of the above mentioned caste (in the case of the *ācāryābhiṣeka*, the exclusion even of the Śākyabhikṣus, who look upon themselves as the most important Buddhist caste) provides occasion for critical questioning in our present age of increasing social and cultural change. The Vajrācāryas are not in a position to offer a rational justification for this. One can therefore certainly say that traditional Newar Buddhism has worked itself into a spiritual crisis.

In theory the possibility was available to the Nepalese Buddhists of having the answers to their questions be given by Buddhists from Tibet, since doctrinal traditions, including philosophical disputation, have there remained alive. These traditions, moreover, are close to Newar Buddhism in their philosophical foundations, as Tibetan Buddhism, too, has integrated

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Nepal, ed. Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, Warminster 1974, pp. 129-149; S. Greenwold, "Buddhist Brahmans", *European Journal of Sociology* 15 (1974), pp. 101-123; S. M. Greenwold, "The Role of the Priest in the Newar Society", *Himalayan Anthropology, The Indo-Tibetan Interface*, ed. James F. Fisher, The Hague 1978, pp. 483-504.

2. Badri Ratna Bajracharya, *Buddhism of Nepal*, Kathmandu 1986 (Ananda Kuti Vihara Trust No. 53).

the Tantric tradition. Some Newar Buddhists have, in fact, become adherents of Tibetan Buddhism, but Tibetan influence on the Newars has remained on the whole rather limited.[3] On the one hand, there are historical reasons for this, but it also has to do most assuredly with special problems that have arisen for the Nepali Buddhists. One must not forget that educated Tibetan Buddhists first became settled in the Kathmandu Valley only after the Chinese annexation of Tibet and the flight of the Dalai Lama in 1959 had led to the exodus of a large portion of the Tibetan educated class. Whereas today there are numerous Tibetan monasteries with knowledgeable monks, particularly in the area around the stupa of Bodhnath, the conditions in the Tibetan monasteries of Central Nepal prior to 1959 were by no means such that from their active engagement adherents for their form of religion could have been won among Newars with a critical bent of mind. Even today the evident lack of discipline among a not inconsiderable portion of the Tibetan monks living in Nepal has had a negative effect upon the reputation of the religion they represent. To this are added language problems. The Tibetans have systematically translated Buddhist terminology into Tibetan, whereas the Newar Buddhists have retained nearly all the Sanskrit terms. For Newars who did not already possess a certain amount of theoretical knowledge concerning Buddhist doctrine it was almost impossible to recognise essentially familiar concepts of that doctrine in a Tibetan guise. Then too, among the more educated Tibetan monks there existed hardly anyone who possessed a tolerably good knowledge of Sanskrit. In any event, cases in which Tibetan clerics were able to exert a lasting influence on Newar Buddhists prior to 1959 were more the exception than the rule, or merely a passing phenomenon.

One must, furthermore, take into consideration the political situation of Nepal prior to 1950. The reigning Rana regime of the time prohibited not only the conversion from Hinduism to another religion (including Buddhism), but was also, on the whole, very intolerant towards religious and linguistic minorities, among whom the Buddhist Newars were counted. The proscription on conversion was, in fact, incorporated into Nepal's new constitu-

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3. For a short account of some contributions of Tibetan Buddhists to Nepalese Buddhism see Min Bahadur Shakya, *A Short History of Buddhism in Nepal*, Kathmandu 1984, pp. 23-32; enlarged 2nd ed. Lalitpur 1986 (Young Buddhist Publication English Series 2), pp. 33-55.

tion, but since 1950 the policy of the governments led by the kings has been characterised by a greater tolerance towards religious minorities.

It is against this background that the Buddhistic reform movements to be discussed in this paper have been developing in Nepal for about thirty years.

4. *The beginnings of Theravāda Buddhism in Nepal*

Since the closing years of the 19th century there have sprung up in a number of Buddhist countries reform movements propagating new views of Buddhism in tune with the times. Following Alexandra David-Neel, nowadays the term "Buddhist modernism" is being used to refer to this phenomenon.[4] Among the aims of the reformers has been that of bringing Buddhism back to life in the land of its origin, India, where it had largely disappeared. The acitivities of the Maha Bodhi Society of India with headquarters in Calcutta have not, however, led to the conversion of a large number of Indians to Buddhism. It has nevertheless been able to spread knowledge of Buddhism among the educated class of India, whereas hitherto Buddhism was known in India essentially from the distorted perspective of Hindu polemics. The dynamic personality of Anagārika Dharmapāla of Ceylon played a decisive role in this.[5]

The policy of the Rana regime in Nepal was naturally dismissive of any attempts to introduce the Buddhist reform movement into Nepal. The few Nepalis who, in the period before 1950, joined these attempts found this out. In the long run, however, the suppression was ineffective, and since the overthrow of the Ranas modernised forms of Buddhism have been able to develop relatively unobstructed.

The suppression of Buddhist reform activity by the Rana regime and the repeated expulsion of monks had as a consequence that the first Nepalese Buddhist associations were formed in India. Now the Buddhist reform move-

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4. See Heinz Bechert, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft in den Ländern des Theravāda-Buddhismus*, Vol. 1, Frankfurt/Berlin 1966, pp. 37ff.

5. See e.g. H. Bechert, *loc. cit.*, pp. 47ff.

ment in India, in its initial phases, bore overwhelmingly the stamp of work done by Sinhalese and Burmese monks. For many of the former Theravāda monks, therefore, India was but a stopover on the way to further studies in Ceylon or in Burma, and the influence from these two countries has remained of a formative nature up to the present day. Only within the last decade has the influence of Thai Buddhism become significantly apparent.

Amṛtānanda Thera[6] has published in Nepali and English an account of the history of Theravāda in Nepal.[7] A short survey is also found in a booklet by K. R. Tuladhar.[8] Moreover, Vaikuṇṭhaprasād Lakaul, in his book *Nepālay hānaṃ Sthaviravāde vayeketa va Nepālabhāṣā hvayeketa*, has published information on this topic.[9] As a further source for these events must be mentioned the first part of the autobiographical notes of Mahāprajñā, brought out posthumously not long ago by Dayāratna Śākya "Nevāmi".[1o] In 1974 R.B. Vandya published a biography of the oldest Theravāda monk in

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6. There is a strong tendency in Nepal to use Sanskrit names and titles instead of the traditional Pāli forms, and quite often Sanskrit and Pāli forms are used side by side.

7. Acārya Bhikṣu Amṛtānanda, *Nepālamā Theravāda buddhadharmako saṃkṣipta itihāsa*, Kathmandu 1982; Bhikkhu Amritananda Thera, *A Short History of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal*, Kathmandu 1982; (altered 3rd ed.:) Bhikkhu Amritananda, *A Short History of Theravada Buddhism in Modern Nepal*, Kathmandu 1986; also published in *The Buddhist Heritage of Nepal*, ed. Dharmodaya Sabha, Kathmandu 1986.

8. Kuldharma Ratna Tuladhar, *Buddhism and Nepal*, Kathmandu 1986.

9. This enlarged edition is not available in the book market. The title of the first edition is *Nepālay Sthaviravāda gukathaṃ vaṅgu khaḥ?*, Kathmandu 1105 N.S.

1o. Daraśā Nevāmi (ed.), *Sāhitya sutā karmasthānācārya va bauddharṣi Mahāprajñāyā ātmakathā. An Autobiography of Mahapragyan (The First Theravadi Bhikshu of Modern Nepal)*, Kathmandu 1983. The English preface was published separately as *An Autobiography of the Late Buddhist Yogi Mahapragyan*, ed. Darasha Newami, Kathmandu 1986. The second part of this autobiography still awaits publication. Supplementary information was given to us by Anāgārikā Caityaprabhā, who took care of Mahāprajñā in his old age. Many references to Mahāprajñā's biography are found in the literature on Theravāda Buddhism in Nepal, but there are a number of contradictions concerning details. Recently a controversy between Dayāratna Śākya and Amṛtānanda Mahāsthavira erupted in Nepalese journals.

Nepal, Prajñānanda Mahāsthavira (Paññānanda Mahāthera).[11] An English version of this work appeared in 1978.[12] Some additional information concerning the period of persecution can be obtained from the autobiographical report of Dharmāloka Mahāsthavira (Dhammāloka Mahāthera) about his pilgrimage to Tibet and China (*Mahācīna yātrā*). This work appeared in 1950 in Kalimpong in Hindi and later in Kathmandu in Nepali.[13] The sections pertaining to Nepal have been published in the *Regmi Research Series* in English translation.[14] The whole work appeared in English translation in 1980.[15] Recently, a biography of Amṛtānanda Mahāthera was written by Kesar Lall.[16] To these may be added several other sources in Newari: Bhikṣu Buddhaghosa considers the history and situation of Theravāda Buddhism in Nepal at the beginning of his catechism (*Buddhadharma sambandhī sāmānya jñāna praśnāvalī*, 2509 B.E.),[17] Dharmaratna Yami wrote a biography of Dharmāloka (2514 B.E.),[18] Bhikṣu Subodhānanda discusses the significance of Śākyamuni-vihāra in the city of Bhojpur in eastern Nepal for the country's Theravāda,[19] and Suśīlā Śākya published a biography of the nun Dharmacārī.[20] In her study of 1976 concerning *Theravāda Buddhism in Nepal*, Ria Kloppenborg undertook to sketch this development on the basis of the

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11. R. B. Vandya, *Saṃghanāyaka Bhadanta Prajñānanda Mahāsthavira yā jīvanī*, Kathmandu 1974; new and considerably enlarged edition: R. B. Bandya, *Saṃgha Mahānāyaka Bhadanta Prajñānanda Mahāsthavira yā jīvanī*, Patan 1986.

12. R. B. Vandya, *Sanghanayaka Ven. Pragnananda Mahasthabir (A Concise Biography)*, Kathmandu 1978.

13. Cf. Ria Kloppenborg, "Theravāda Buddhism in Nepal", *Kailash* V.4 (1977), p. 304, note 11. We have seen the following editions: *Mahācīna yātrā* (Hindi), Kathmandu 1974, and *Mahācīna yātrā* (Nepali), Lumbini 2521 B.E.

14. *Regmi Research Series*, Year 9, No. 3 (March 1, 1977), pp. 33-41; No. 4 (April 1, 1977), pp. 49-51.

15. Bhikkhu Dharmaloka Mahasthavir, *Pilgrimage to Great China*, Lumbini 1980; the somewhat peculiar introduction of the translator has no relevance for the text.

16. Kesar Lall, *A Brief Biography of Ven. Bhikkhu Amritananda*, Kathmandu 1986 (Ananda Kuti Vihara Trust No. 52).

17. Lalitpur 1086 N.S.

18. *Mahāsthavira Dhammāloka Bhante*, (Nepal) 1970.

19. *Saptabodhyaṃga dharma bhāvanā*, Bhojpur 2517 B.E., pp. ka-ḍa.

20. *Anāgārikā Dharmacārī tathā upāsikārāmayā saṃkṣipta-paricaya*, Kathmandu 1066 N.S.

information available to her at the time.[21]

The dates supplied in the sources are often inexact, and at times contradictions in the source materials may be discovered. This is not to be wondered at given the fact that a large portion of the data contained in these reports was reconstructed from the memories of witnesses. In any case, no picture exact in every detail can as yet be made of this development. Various groups of monks seem concerned to confer upon their own teachers primacy for the first appearance of Theravāda monks in Nepal, for the first sermon of Theravāda teaching in the country or for other similar landmark events.

Mahāprajñā, who received the *pabbajjā* in Kuśinagara in 1928, appears in fact to have been the first Theravāda monk from Nepal. We shall give a synopsis of his biography in the next section. Prajñānanda, the most senior living Theravāda monk of Nepal, was ordained in the Tibetan tradition in 1928 and, at that time, he bore the name of Phrin-las Tshul-khrims (Karmaśīla). In 1930 he was reordained in the Theravāda tradition by Candramaṇi Thera in Kuśinagar, and in 1932 he took the *upasampadā* in Arakan, receiving the monk's name Prajñānanda. Dharmāloka was accepted as *sāmaṇera* into the monastic order by the same Candramaṇi Thera in Kuśinagar in 1931; soon thereafter he received the *upasampadā* in the Burmese temple of Sarnath. In the following years Dharmāloka visited Tibet and China. In the biographies of these three monks the assertion is in each case made that they were "the first yellow-robed monk to visit Nepal". Also among the leading personalities of early Nepalese Theravāda Buddhism belongs the name of Amṛtānanda Bhikkhu, who was received into the Sangha in 1936 at the age of 18.

In their attempts to spread Theravāda teachings in Nepal after having been ordained in India, the monks came into conflict with the policies of the Rana government and were expelled from the country in 1937 and - after some of them had returned to Nepal in the period 1941/42 - again in 1944. In 1944 they founded in Sarnath the "Dharmodaya Sabha" as a society of the Nepalese Theravāda Buddhists. In the year 1946 Prime Minister Padma Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana permitted at least one monk, Dhammāloka Thera,

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21. Ria Kloppenborg, "Theravāda Buddhism in Nepal", *Kailash* V.4 (1977). pp. 301-321.

to return to Nepal. The Dharmodaya Sabha continued, nevertheless, to be outlawed in Nepal. In 1947 they transferred their seat to Kalimpong. Nārada Thera, the Buddhist missionary from Vajirārāma in Colombo active in many countries, visited Kathmandu three times in the years from 1946 to 1948. During this period various monks were allowed to return to Nepal. In 1948 the Laṅkācaitya in Ānandakuṭīvihāra, at the foot of the hill at Svayambhu, was dedicated. In the same year the full moon day of the month of Vaiśākha ("Vesak festival"), celebrated by the Theravāda Buddhists as the anniversary of the birth and death of the Buddha, was recognised as a holiday for Buddhist employees of the government.[22]

5. *The biography of Mahāprajñā (19o1-1978)*[23]

Due to its importance, at this point a biographical sketch of Mahāprajñā, who stood at the beginning of Nepal's Theravāda movement, should be included. His parents were called Kul Nārāyaṇ and Śrīmatī Hīrā Māyā. After having studied dance and music and having been employed for a short time in the royal palace, he was commissioned by a Buddhist layman to compose hymns in praise of the Buddha, for which purpose he sedulously studied the Newari translation of the *Lalitavistara* written by Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya. He came into close contact with Tibetan Buddhism through meeting the Kyanche Lama[24] from East Tibet, who in 1922 made a pilgrimage to Svayambunath Stupa and preached in the Kathmandu Valley. Somewhat later, probably in the year 1924, Mahāprajñā travelled to Tibet to become a monk, and, together with two other Newars, Harṣa Dev and Kāñchā Śākya, underwent the *pravrajyā* in 'Phags-pa monastery. He now bore the spiritual name dPal-ldan Śes-rab. Having returned to Nepal, he lived on Nāgārjuna Mountain together with four other Newar monks. Their names were Mahācandra (lay name: Kañchā Śākya), Mahājñāna (Dālcini Śākya), Mahāvīrya (Bekhārāj Śākya) and Mahākṣānti

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22. Amritananda, *Short History* (see note 7), (1982 edition:) p. 7, (1986 edition:) p. 12.

23. Cf. note 1o.

24. This name was explained to us as *rgyaṅ-'tshal bla-ma*, i.e. the Lama who came from far away (*rgyaṅ*) while prostrating (*'tshal*). Therefore, it is uncertain if it represents a personal name. Cf. also Colin Rosser, "Social Mobility in the Newar Caste System", *Caste and Kin in Nepal, India and Ceylon*, ed. Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, London 1966, p. 1o5, where the name is given as Yangtse Lama and the year of arrival in Kathmandu as 1923.

(Jñāna). Only the last of these is still living, in an ashram at the foot of the Svayambhu hill. Their Tibetan teacher at the time was Tshe-riṅ Nor-bu, who introduced them to the meditational techniques of the rÑiṅ-ma school. The five Newar monks were now wearing monk's robes, which they fashioned according to the pattern of old frescoes and statues, and went around Kathmandu begging for alms, thereby causing a great stir.

The monks quickly incurred the displeasure of orthodox Brahmans, who initiated proceedings against them for having offended religion. They were expelled from the country and deported to India. In Bodh Gaya they received the *pabbajjā* according to Theravāda ritual from a Burmese monk. Mahāprajñā made stops in Calcutta and in Benares, and from there travelled to Kalimpong. In May or June of 1926 he set off with his Tibetan teacher, Tshe-riṅ Nor-bu, to Lhasa. In Lhasa, Mahāprajñā studied logic and the teaching of spiritual release, visited Shigatse and then returned to India together with Mahāvīrya and a newly converted Newar. This latter was Kulmān Singh Vaidya, who now received the spiritual name Karmaśīla and later, under the name Prajñānanda Mahāsthavira, became head of the Theravāda Sangha in Nepal.

It is only after his return to India that Mahāprajñā appears to have come into contact with the Buddhist reform movement in its modern form. In the year 1928 he again received, in Kuśinagar, an ordination as *śrāmaṇera* in the Theravāda tradition. His teacher was now Candramaṇi, a monk from Arakan who worked closely with Anagārika Dharmapāla. Since that time Kuśinagar, the site of the Buddha's entry into *parinirvāṇa*, has remained an important place of visitation for Nepalis interested in Theravāda Buddhism. At the counsel of Candramaṇi, Mahāprajñā in 1929 went on to Rangoon. Here he received the *upasampadā*. He devoted himself in Burma to ascetic practices and intensive meditation. In the course of this he had numerous visions. During this time, incidentally, he was said to have paid a short visit to Nepal with a group of pilgrims without being recognised. Mahāprajñā's next stop was Chittagong, where he put up first at the monastery of the Bengali monk Prajñāloka Mahāsthavira and then in another Bengali monastery. This was in 1932. Seriously ill with malaria, Mahāprajñā not long afterwards returned to Kalimpong via Calcutta. From here he again visited Nepal in 1937, namely Bhojpur in the eastern part of the country, where he met up with the Nepali monk Amṛtānanda, who had been ordained in

Kuśinagar in 1936. Upon orders of the government in Kathmandu, both were arrested and again expelled from the country.

Mahāprajñā now lived in Kalimpong. Here he composed his magnum opus, *Buddha vacanāmṛta-pāli-bhāṣānusara Lalitvavistara bodhicaryā*, a biography of the Buddha in Newari on the basis of the Pali sources, for which he consciously chose the title of the Mahāyānistic Buddha biography *Lalita-vistara*. The work was intended to replace the Mahāyāna one, which had become popular in the previously mentioned translation by Niṣṭhānanda Vajrā-cārya. He published his work in 2484 B.E. (1940) still as "Śri Mahāprajñā Bhikṣu". As publishers appear the bhikkhus Mahāprajñā and Amṛtānanda. Soon afterwards, however, Mahāprajñā laid aside his monk's robe, got married in Kalimpong and fathered two sons and a daughter. In the year 1956 he slipped away from his family and made off to Kathmandu to Śrīgha Vihāra, where he lived, not as a formally ordained monk, but as a Bauddha-ṛṣi (Buddhist ascetic). But his wife tracked him down there and fetched him back to Kalimpong. He was not long held down there though. In 1961 he again made a lone trip to his homeland, where, from that time to his death in 1978, he lived as a Buddhist ascetic, at first in Sumaṅgalavihāra in Patan, afterwards in Gaṇamahāvihāra in Kathmandu, and then in Dharmacakra-āśrama, built for him by a Taṇḍukār in the vicinity of Bagh Bazar in Kathmandu. Following a conflict with the lay administration of this latter temple, he went on to Mahāprajñā-āśrama near Dilli Bazar, which he had constructed in 1971. The *upāsikā* Caityaprabhā tended him the final years of his life and administers his unpublished works.

6. *More recent developments within Nepalese Theravāda Buddhism*

After 1950 Theravāda Buddhism was able to develop relatively freely in Nepal. The "Dharmodaya Sabha" now moved its headquarters from Kalimpong to Kathmandu. Since 1950 it has been performing for Nepal the duties of a "regional center" of the W.F.B. mentioned at the beginning.[25] The W.F.B. held a general meeting in Kathmandu as early as 1956. This fourth W.F.B. conference took place in the year of the Buddha Jayanti celebrations, i.e.

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25. The World Fellowship of Buddhists, *Report of the Inaugural Conference*, (Colombo 1950), p. 76; see also *Report of the 4th World Buddhist Conference*, Kathmandu 1956, pp. 97ff.

in the 2500th year after the *nirvāṇa* of the Buddha according to the chronology of the Theravādins, which has since been accepted by practically all important Buddhist groups. This year marked the pinnacle of hope among Buddhists of many countries for a serious reform of their religion; it was also the time of the Sixth Buddhist Council (Chaṭṭasaṅgāyanā) in Rangoon.[26] From the report on the W.F.B. conference in Kathmandu and from other contemporary sources it becomes clear what great expectations the Buddhists of Nepal also shared with regard to further developments.[27]

As Ria Kloppenburg describes in her study, the actual development of Theravāda Buddhism did not live up to these hopes.[28] Though the Theravādins, who in the beginning had controlled and fashioned the entire Buddhist reform movement in Nepal, continued to remain a strong force in the Buddhist life of the country, competing Buddhist movements now began to gain in influence. Both Tibetan Buddhism, strengthened by the stream of refugees after 1959, and a reform movement within traditional Newar Buddhism laid claim to equal status. The activities of the Dharmodaya Sabha, which had arrogated to itself the right to speak for all Buddhists, came in the course of the following years almost completely to a standstill.

In her previously mentioned monograph, Ria Kloppenburg has described the situation of Nepalese Theravāda Buddhism in the period around 1977, to which reference may here be made.[29] A further, very short sketch of the situation during this period is given by John K. Locke.[30] The only more recent scholarly study on this topic comes from Ramesh Chandra Tewari; it is based on observations from the years 1978 to 1982.[31] In Tewari's study one finds information concerning the background of monks and nuns from the various Newar castes together with percentages.[32]

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26. H. Bechert, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft* (see note 4), Vol. 1, pp. 105ff.

27. The World Fellowship of Buddhists, *Report of the 4th World Buddhist Conference*, Kathmandu 1956, pp. 9-11; R. Kloppenborg, "Theravāda in Nepal" (see note 21), p. 309.

28. R. Kloppenborg, "Theravāda in Nepal" (see note 21), pp. 310f.

29. *Loc.cit.*, pp. 311-317.

30. "Present-Day Buddhism in Nepal" (see note 1), p. 300.

31. Ramesh Chandra Tewari, "Socio-Cultural Aspects of Theravāda Buddhism in Nepal", *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 6.2 (1983), pp. 67-93.

32. *Loc.cit.*, pp. 75ff.

An important factor in the development of Buddhism in modern-day Nepal are the plans of the government to build up Lumbini as an international center for pilgrims. In contrast to Bodh Gaya, the site of the Buddha's enlightenment, which has remained a pilgrimage center continuously throughout the centuries, the place where the Buddha was born was completely forgotten until, in the year 1895, the pillar erected in Lumbini by King Aśoka was discovered by archaeologists. Since that time Buddhist pilgrims and tourists have occasionally visited the site, but it was only in 1953 that a Theravāda temple, and in 1968 that a Tibetan monastery of the Sa-skya school, were built there. Plans to build up this sacred place on a grand scale have been in existence since 1968. The "Lumbini Development Project", with the international participation of the United Nations, a number of South and Southeast Asian countries and Japan, constituted one of Nepal's large development projects. Progress on the project, however, has lagged behind expectations. Therefore, it was reorganized as the "Lumbini Development Trust" in 1986.

If Nepal has once again extended an invitation to host a W.F.B. conference, then Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha, has surely played a role - not to be underestimated - for this decision, which in the end was made by the government. Formally, the invitation comes from the Dharmodaya Sabha, which 1984 resumed activities.[33] Although its office is housed at present in a Theravāda monastery, it is no longer entirely dominated by the Theravādins. The very active "Young Men's Buddhist Association" (Y.M.B.A.) is likewise a nonsectarian Buddhist fellowship. On the whole, however, these organisations fall within the sway of Buddhist modernism, whose significance for Nepal will be discussed in the following section.

7. *Buddhist modernism in Nepal*

In an attempt to list the most important characteristics of Buddhist modernism, elsewhere note has briefly been taken of twelve features which may be observed in most of the traditional Buddhist countries.[34] This list

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33. A report on this conference by Jens-Uwe Hartmann appeared in the Internationales Asienforum 18 (1987), pp. 391-395.

34. Heinz Bechert, "The Ideal of Nirvana in a Changing World: Some Reflections on the Phenomenon of Buddhist Modernism", *Buddhism's Contribution to World Culture and Peace*, ed. N. A. Jayawickrama, Dehiwala (1986), pp. 1-7.

cannot be applied unaltered to Nepal, as the special situation of the Buddhists of the country has led to a number of peculiarities. The features of Nepalese modernism observed by us will here be presented in summary form.

Modern Buddhism has "rediscovered" the early Buddhist texts and thus tends to interpret the old texts independently of the time-honoured exegetical traditions. The canonical texts have also been made accessible to lay Buddhists and translated into the various modern languages, after having been handed down over the centuries almost exclusively in Pali, and thus having been accessible and comprehensible only to educated monks. In Nepal, among other countries, these tendencies have led to animated literary activity. While up to now only a very limited portion of the canonical texts are available in Newari or Nepali translations, still, in view of the small number of monks, the zeal with which they have taken on the task must be admired.

The Nepalese Theravādins make adept use of forms of preaching keyed to the times. Preaching and teaching of doctrine are, as has been mentioned, in and of themselves a fundamental innovation when compared to the ritual orientation of traditional Newar Buddhism. Among the Theravādins are a number of superb preachers who know how to present the doctrine to their listeners in a diverting and yet serious form. They skillfully weave in episodes from the rich narrative tradition of Theravāda Buddhism, in particular from the *Dhammapada* commentary, the *Jātakas* and the *Rasavāhinī*. In this connection one should also mention the numerous Newari adaptations of *Jātaka* narratives.

Among the most successful preachers is Anāgārikā Dhammavatī, a nun from Dharmakīrtivihāra in Kathmandu, which, by dint of this fact, has today become one of the most influential centers of the Theravāda movement.[35] Moreover, the Theravādins take every opportunity offered them to make use of modern media. Thus the monk Maitrī regularly speaks over Nepali television; the training for this he obtained in Sri Lanka.

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35. Cf. the three pamphlets published in English: *Dharma Kirti Vihar Today*, Kathmandu s.d., *Dharma Kirti Vihar*, Kathmandu 1982, *Dharmakirti in a Nutshell*, Kathmandu 1986.

Apart from the sermon, however, the publication of written material remains one of the most effective methods of spreading Theravāda Buddhism. The number of relevant publications in Newari, and to a lesser extent in Nepali, is considerable. A large percentage of the monks have written books. The share of Theravāda publications among modern Newar literature far surpasses that of the writings published by traditional Newar Buddhists and probably Hindu publications in Newari too, even though the number of Theravādins is almost nonexistent in comparison with these two groups. One can show this in detail with the bibliographies published by Bhikṣu Sudarśana and Kamal Prakāś Malla.[36]

Modern Buddhists are keenly conscious of a sense of international solidarity. It is particularly salient among minorities in need of foreign help. The relatively small group of Nepalese monks and nuns is today still dependent upon stipends and study opportunities being provided to them by Buddhist countries such as Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand. The majority of Nepalese Theravāda clerics have studied abroad; many have also received their ordination in these countries.

The feeling that a good education is necessary is very widespread among most Theravādins of Nepal. This ties in closely with the conviction that the teaching of doctrine is one of the monks' and nuns' primary tasks.

One of the most striking features of Buddhist modernism is the rebirth and popularisation of meditational techniques. In contrast to the traditional teaching of meditation - provided in each case by one teacher for individual students -, the modernists have made a kind of mass movement out of meditating. Renowned teachers found meditation centers, which usually draw a large response. Apart from preaching, there is probably nothing that has so furthered the spread of Theravāda Buddhism as the possibility of taking part in these meditational practices. At present three main traditions may be observed in many Theravāda Buddhist communities: (1) the meditational school, Burmese in origin, of Mahasi Sayadaw, who died in

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36. Kamala Prakāśa Malla, *Nepāla bhāṣāyā dhvānā saphūyā dhalaḥ (Bibliography of Nepal Bhasha). Ne. Saṃ. 1020-1097*, Kathmandu 1099 N.S.; Kamala Prakāśa Malla, *Nepāla bhāṣāya dhvānā saphūyā dhalaḥ - 2. Ne. Saṃ 1098 - 1104. Nepal Bhasha Bibliography 1978-1984*, Kathmandu 1104 N.S.; Bhikṣu Sudarśana, *Buddha, Buddha-dharma sambandhī grantha-sūcī*, Kathmandu 2518 B.E.

1982, (2) the meditational school of Satya Nārāyaṇ Goenka (Igatpuri), introduced from India and originally developed by the Burmese U Ba Khin, and (3) the Dhammakāya meditation of Thailand. Though we could observe only the first two of these as being practised by Theravādins in Nepal, the "meditation practice by Vijjā Dhammakāya approach" may be expected to reach Nepal sooner or later, because several Nepalese monks and novices receive their training in the Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen in Thonburi.

Like modern Buddhists of other countries, the Nepalese Theravādins stress the rational elements of the Buddhist doctrine. Ethics thereby become central. Although in modern Buddhist publications there is an occasional mention of "miracles" which the Buddha and Buddhist saints are said to have performed, on the whole the tendency to "demythologise" Buddhist doctrine prevails. In support to this is the fact that the Buddha himself, according to the tradition of the canonical texts, exhibited a hostile attitude towards wonder-working. A part of the demythologisation of Buddhism is also the abandonment or at least relativisation of traditional Buddhist cosmography.

The "demythologised" Buddhism is for the modernists the most scientific of all religions, there being nothing in the contents of its teaching which might contradict scientific thought. Many go yet another step further and postulate a fundamental correspondence between Buddhism and science. These themes are addressed in publications of all schools of modern Buddhism.

Particularly for the Nepalese Theravādins is the stress upon rational modes of thought of special significance, since they consciously keep their distance from the ritualism of the traditional Buddhists with its - from their point of view - magical modes of thought, and from their faith in the efficacy of rituals and their exaggerated belief in miracles.

An almost extreme lack of ornamentation of the Theravāda temples, which sets itself off from the rich pictorial adornment of the temples in other Theravāda countries, is striking as an outward sign of the above attitude. To be sure, the Buddha is represented as a figure, with statues often brought in from other Theravāda countries, but the ornamentation of the temple is not seldom reduced to a single statue. At the heart of this is a spiritual stance oriented to what is essential in Buddhism, and which accepts the fact that, as a consequence of this altered attitude towards works of art, basic aesthetic traditions are lost which are peculiar to

traditional Newar Buddhism. The critical attitude towards the rich pictorial ornamentation of Newar temples is naturally connected with the Theravādins' negative attitude towards the cult practices of Newar Buddhism. The European observer feels occasioned here to recall the relationship between Protestantism and Catholicism.

Whereas the Theravādins of Nepal, therefore, hardly make use of the mode of pictorial representation for their teachings, unlike, for example, the Buddhists of Thailand with their rich temple paintings, they do make adept use of the traditions of temple singing as handed down by the Newars. Although the songs, called *jñānamālā*, are not exclusively Buddhist, the Theravādins have made a decided contribution in developing them. Here, too, a comparison with Protestant congregational singing suggests itself. Today one comes across this singing, in which at times the entire congregation takes part, during almost all social gatherings in Theravāda temples. They have no paradigm in other Theravāda countries.

The modernists, among whom we may place the Theravādins of Nepal, also tend to relativise the unworldly disposition of traditional Theravāda Buddhism. To be sure, it is not categorically denied that this world must not in itself be understood as being of value, since existence is full of suffering, so that the ultimate goal of all Buddhists must be to completely overcome it. Emphasis, however, is shifted to the extent that the ability of men to bring about their own release is taken to justify calling Buddhism a "religion of optimism". Buddhism is understood as a force which can change the world because it can change ourselves. Therefore there exists a moral obligation to engage actively in the betterment of the social order. The modern Buddhists ascribe already to the Buddha a distinctive "social philosophy". Writings of this type are exceedingly popular in Nepal. From this Buddhist social doctrine values characteristic of a modern view of the world are being derived. These include, for example, the emancipation of women. The tendency to take up social tasks can also be observed with increasing frequency. In her small work *Svāsthya lābha*, the nun Dhammavatī sets forth how realising the teachings of Buddhism can help us achieve spiritual and physical health.

The glorification of the precolonial past plays a large role in the modernism of the Sinhalese and Burmese Buddhists. But as in Thailand, which was likewise never a colony, so too in Nepal this phenomenon does not

exist. R. Kloppenborg did, however, notice a strong interest in that period of the country's history which bore more prominently the stamp of Buddhism.[37]

In this connection it should not be overlooked that, for the Newars, Buddhism constitutes an element of their special identity. However, as one can see in their reaction to the question of language, their feelings are mixed. This problem, however, will not be further addressed here.

8. *The structure of Nepalese Theravāda Buddhism*

In the early phases of Theravāda, as described in the fourth section, the number of monks and monasteries was so small that there was no need for a special organization or special rules for the Nepalese Sangha. Seniority according to the age at ordination, the principle in force in the original Sangha, sufficed as a basis for establishing rank. In addition, many customs were adopted from the various countries in which the individual monks received their education. With the increase of monks and monasteries, however, the settling of questions relating to the structure of the Sangha has more recently become unavoidable. These have pertained, in particular, to the question of recognition of the monk's ordination (*upasampadā*) as well as the admission of novices to the *upasampadā*. The decision rested from the beginning with the Sangha of the leading monasteries in Kathmandu and Patan, which maintained close contact with one another. Most Theravāda monasteries may to a certain extent be regarded as filial monasteries of Anandakuṭīvihāra, the country's oldest Theravāda monastery. Recently the Akhil Nepāl Bhikkhu Mahāsaṅgh which was originally formed in 1951,[38] has been reorganized. This is a formal Sangha organisation which gave itself a new constitution in 1985. Prajñānanda Mahāsthavira (born 1900 in Kathmandu) who, as mentioned, received the *upasampadā* in 1932 and so is Nepal's senior monk, was confirmed as the head of the Sangha (*saṅghanāyaka*).

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37. R. Kloppenborg, "Theravāda in Nepal" (see note 21), p. 303.

38. Amritananda, *Short History* (see note 7), (1982 edition:) p. 7, (1986 edition:) p. 11.

Now not only for each new ordination, but also for every other lawful act of the Sangha (*vinayakamma*) laid down in canonical Buddhist law and requiring the use of prescribed formulas (*kammavācā*), both the complete participation of all monks within a ceremonially delimited area (*sīmā*) and, in each case, a prescribed minimum number of monks are necessary. As Nepal is recognised as a border region (*paccantima janapada*), five monks are enough, according to the rules of the Vinaya, to administer an *upasampadā* (see *Vinayapiṭaka*, vol. I, p. 197), whereas in the "middle country" (*majjhima janapada*), i.e. in northern India, ten fully ordained monks have to take part (see *Vinayapiṭaka*, vol. I, p. 319). In Nepal, however, according to authoritative monks, in order to insure that this and other *vinayakammas* are in fact legally binding, care is taken that at least ten monks are present. This requires in almost every case the cooperation of monks from more than one monastery, since so many monks do not live in any one of the Theravāda monasteries. Other important rituals are also usually performed in common by members of more than one monastery.

The large majority of Nepalese Theravāda monks have received their *upasampadā* abroad. This means that they belong to various lineal traditions. These various lineal traditions have led to groups called *nikāya* being formed in the traditional Theravāda communities. This term has been referred to, somewhat misleadingly, as "Buddhist sects". In fact, these are groups which only have separate ways of performing the formal legal acts according to canonical law, and whose differences are in no way comparable with those of Christian confessions or even Christian sects (Baptists etc.). For details refer to the discussion in the volume *Zur Schulzugehörigkeit von Werken der Hīnayāna-Literatur*.[39]

Almost all important lineal traditions of Theravāda Buddhism still alive today in Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand can be found in Nepal. Although it represents a comparatively small group in Sri Lanka, the Amarapura-Śrī-Dharmarakṣita-Nikāya, being the particular subsect of the Amarapura-Nikāya to which the Vajirārāma in Bambalapiṭiya (a part of Colombo) belongs,[4o] figures prominently in Nepal, because it was the home monastery

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39. Vol. 1 (Symposien zur Buddhismusforschung III,1), ed. Heinz Bechert, Göttingen 1985 (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wisschenschaften in Göttingen 149), pp. 26-44.

4o. *Buddha Śāsana Komiṣan Vārtāva*, XVIII väni säsi vārtāva, Colombo 1959, § 1o1, p. 4o.

of Nārada Thera. He has been mentioned as one of the leading Theravāda missionaries here. In addition, one comes across monks who have been ordained in the Rāmañña-Nikāya, a reform group founded in 1864 and reputed to be particularly strict.[41] Occasionally Nepalese monks have also been ordained in the Syāma-Nikāya. Of the Burmese traditions, all three main groups (Sudhamma-Nikāya, Shwegyin Nikāya and Dvāra-Nikāya) likewise appear to be represented. In Thailand, the Dhammayuttika Nikāya has participated more actively in the Nepal mission than the Mahānikāya.[42] The ordination traditions of the Indian Theravāda monasteries in which several Nepalese monks received the *upasampadā* also derive each from one of the named traditions.

According to the prevailing law as conceived by the Theravādins of these countries, *vinayakammas* may be performed only by monastic communities whose monks belong to the same lineal tradition, i.e. to the same *nikāya*. They alone are competent to perform *vinayakammas* or acts of Buddhist ecclesiastical law. They alone are able to form a Sangha in the strict sense of the word.

The retention of this conception of the law would have had serious consequences for the Theravāda monks of Nepal. It would have led to the fragmentation of their Sangha and at the same time made Nepal's monastic orders incompetent to perform *vinayakammas* as long as enough monks of each individual *nikāya* tradition were not present in Nepal. This situation failed to develop, because, from the beginning, the monks of Nepal decided to view the traditional division into *nikāyas* as irrelevant for their Sangha. While the Sangha association formed by them retains the final say concerning whether to recognise monks' ordinations, the *upasampadā* of all *nikāyas* recognised in the countries concerned is taken to be binding. In past years the Sangha of Nepal itself has carried out a number of new ordinations in this "mixed" combination.

This procedure, from the standpoint of the traditional *nikāyas* in Theravāda countries, must be regarded as nothing short of a revolutionary deviation from the customary practice. But it is not entirely without pre-

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41. *Loc.cit.*, §§ 117-126, pp. 46-49; cf. H. Bechert, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft* (see note 4), Vol. 1, pp. 212ff.

42. For these two *nikāyas* of the Thai Sangha see H. Bechert, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft in den Ländern des Theravāda Buddhismus*, Vol. 2, Wiesbaden 1967, pp. 182ff.

cedent. Thus the Sangha of the Buddhist monastic community in Sri Lanka founded by Ñāṇatiloka ("Nyanatiloka") Mahāthera, which in the beginning was composed mainly of European monks, also ignored the traditional division into *nikāyas*.[43] In European and Indonesian Buddhist monasteries, too, ordinations of monks of different lineal traditions were carried out in common. At present, however, a demarcation between the various traditions can be observed in European Buddhism, particularly in London. This has to do with the fact that those who serve as heads of these communities are missionaries from the Asian countries who go by the canonical rules familiar to them.

The situation in Nepal is different. Although some monks from foreign Theravāda communities live in Nepalese monasteries, from the very beginning they have had the status of guests. In any case, it is Nepalis who head the monasteries and make the decisions concerning such questions.

As mentioned, the newly and strictly organised *mahāsangha* passes judgement on the recognition of foreign ordinations as well as on the admission of Nepalis to ordination. Thus the ordination of Mahākṣānti, one of the pupils of Mahāprajñā, mentioned in section 5, was not recognised. He was therefore not received into any of the established monastic communities and lives instead by himself in an ashram at the foot of Svayambhu hill. A committee of five *upādhyāyas* is now responsible for admission to the ordinations, without whose assent no *upasampadā* is conferred. At present the following monks fulfill this task: Prajñānanda, Śākyānanda, Aniruddha, Amṛtānanda and Subodhānanda.

Problems in the ordination have also arisen from the caste structure of the Newar population. To be sure, all Theravāda Buddhists view the caste system in principle as a purely secular affair, but in one part of the Sangha of Sri Lanka a direct influence of the caste system has asserted itself over the structure of the Sangha, as has been discussed elsewhere.[44] In Nepal, too, in special consideration of lay persons, upon whose support the Sangha is very dependent, concessions were made when laymen threatened to withdraw their support if certain bounds were overstepped in overcoming caste barriers.

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43. H. Bechert, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft*, Vol. 1 (see note 4), p. 212f., note 718.

44. *Loc.cit.*, pp. 34 and 219f.

Such problems arose first in connection with the begging of alms, when high-caste lay adherents made it clear to the monks that they should not accept donations from untouchables. After an initial willingness to compromise on the part of some members of the Sangha, the Buddhist rule of taking gifts of alms from anyone, regardless of person, appears in this case to have won the day. One present-day Brahmin member of the Sangha lives primarily from the donations of untouchables. And while several untouchables have been received into the community of monks, the Sangha has not yet been able to bring itself to confer the *upasampadā* on a monk coming from an untouchable caste. Such monks must therefore be content with the status of a *sāmaṇera*.

As mentioned previously, for the ordination and other legal acts of the Sangha the demarcation of a particular "boundary" (*sīmā*) is necessary, i.e. the place or area for the performance of the *vinayakammas* must be formally demarcated by reciting a prescribed formula (*kammavācā*). In Nepal there are today five *sīmās*. Three of these are "ordination buildings" (*uposathāgāra*), demarcated by the usual double row of *sīmā* stones, namely in Ānandakuṭīvihāra in Kathmandu, in Sumaṅgalavihāra in Patan and in the Theravāda temple in Lumbini. In addition, in Dhyānakuṭīvihāra in Banepa and near Butval a so-called *udakukkhepasīmā* in a river is used.[45]

As long as the Ceylonese influence dominated in the Nepalese Sangha, the custom of temporary membership in the Sangha could not establish itself. This changed with the growing influence of monks educated in Thailand, as this custom conforms to Thai traditions. However, as a matter of principle, the young persons accepted into the Sangha for a limited time at first received merely the *pabbajjā* (Skt. *pravrajyā*). Only more recently has the *upasampadā* been conferred for a certain term on a fairly large number of Newars, naturally only on those who have attained the minimum age prescribed in the *vinaya* of 2o years. In such cases the *mahāsangha* is strict to prescribe that the monks in question actually do lay down their monk's garments after the term agreed upon. For such cases, too, the prior assent of the five *upādhyāyas* is waived. As far as we know, this is a rule

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45. For *udakukkhepasīmā* see *Zur Schulzugehörigkeit von Werken der Hīnayāna-Literatur* (see note 39), p. 38; C. S. Upasak, *Dictionary of Early Buddhist Monastic Terms (Based on Pali Literature)*, Varanasi 1975, p. 42.

confined to Nepal; in the remaining Theravāda countries the Sangha is not able to invalidate an *upasampadā*, once conferred, if a monk subsequently alters his intention of belonging to the Sangha only temporarily.

In Nepalese Theravāda Buddhism, nuns have attained to a degree of significance that is without precedent in the rest of the Theravāda countries. As is well known, the *upasampadā* tradition of nuns in Theravāda Buddhism is commonly accepted to have faded in 456 A.D. There are therefore no longer any *bhikkhuṇīs*. The controversial attempts made in recent years in Ceylon by the nun Khemā and her adherents to reintroduce ordination from the Chinese Sangha into Theravāda Buddhism have gone unnoticed in Nepal. According to the order's bylaws, the Theravāda nuns of Nepal are not strictly members of the Sangha but correspond, rather, to the Buddhist female ascetics, called *dasasīla-upāsikā*, of other Theravāda countries. In Nepal they go by the name of *anāgārikā*. This is an extension of the term for Buddhist lay male ascetics, *anagārika*, accepted into usage in Ceylon in the 19th century;[46] the term *anagārika* for lay ascetics of the male sex is not, incidentally, used in Nepal.

The *anāgārikās* live in part in their own convents, and in part they are housed in special sections of monasteries. At present, of a total of 44 permanently occupied Theravāda monasteries and convents, six are straight convents, six are monasteries with monks and nuns, and four are former monasteries taken over completely by nuns. That monks and nuns in several of these monasteries live, so to speak, under one roof, is not strictly in keeping with the time-honoured rule and has occasioned criticism on the part of some lay adherents. Some monks, too, originally had the tendency to regard the nuns as the monastery's cooks and maids. This ran not only into criticism from the laity but was no longer accepted by the young, often very educated and self-confident nuns.

A number of nuns have pursued studies abroad. Here the influence of Burma predominates, where the community of nuns was included in the Śāsana Reform that has been carried out since 1979,[47] and in recent years the

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46. Cf. Richard F. Gombrich, *Precept and Practice. Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon*, Oxford 1971, p. 54, note 42.

47. Heinz Bechert, "Neue buddhistische Orthodoxie: Bemerkungen zur Gliederung und zur Reform des Sangha in Birma", *Numen* (in the press).

clerical order has gained in popularity and prestige even, and particularly, among young women of the urbanised middle class. Formerly, nuns in Burma did not have any particular role to play. The convent of Dharmakîrtivihāra in Kathmandu has become a center of Burmese influence on Nepalese Buddhism. The Burmese educated *anāgārikā* Dhammavatī, by means of her preaching, has had by far the greatest success of all Theravāda preachers.

The particularly great influence of the *anāgārikās*, and that in the public arena, has occasioned a sense of uneasiness among several conservative monks. A controversy arose when a small group of older monks wanted to prohibit the nuns from using the term *vihāra* for their convents; convents were supposed to be allowed only the name of *ārāma*.[48] This initiative had no results until now not only because of the resistance of the nuns but also because of its being rejected by the majority of monks.

The situation as regards monastery property is often not clearly regulated. A formal donation to the Sangha by which it becomes the collective owner has heretofore occured only in a few cases. Some monks and nuns live in old Newar *vihāras*, which have been put at their disposal by members of Buddhist families (usually Śākyabhikṣus). In one such case, after the death of the monk living in it, the *vihāra* was transferred to the family members who were the legal claimants according to Nepal's inheritance laws. The monks are aware of the problems involved and hope that monastic (*saṅghika*) property can be procured to a greater degree under sanction of law. In such a case, the *mahāsaṅgha* would decide who should take over the monastery after the death of a monk. A settling of the rights of succession has, by the way, not yet occured, since the need has not yet arisen. There are two reasons for this: in the first place, Nepal's Theravāda Sangha does not yet have a long history, if one disregards the very few monks of the early period. Secondly, there are more than enough convents and monasteries. There exists, rather, a dearth of monks and nuns, so that a fairly large number of convents and monasteries are uninhabited or are visited only occasionally by monks or nuns residing elsewhere.

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48. See Bhikṣu Amṛtānanda, *Nhyasaḥyā lisaḥ (Ināpa patrikāy vaḥgu)*, Kathmandu 1985 (Ānadakuṭī Vihāraguṭhī No. 45).

This seems to be the case at present for 16 of a total of 56 Theravāda convents and monasteries. In all, according to information supplied to us, there are today in Nepal 42 *bhikkhus*, some 30-35 *sāmaṇeras* and about 60 *anāgārikās*. Of these, about 35 monks, mostly *sāmaṇeras*, and 4 nuns live abroad, primarily to continue their religious education. In Sri Lanka there is the Sri Lanka Nepal Buddhist Foundation to serve the needs of monks from Nepal, and in Thailand it is primarily Wat Bovoranives in Bangkok, the center of the Dhammayuttika-Nikāya, where, among others, Nepalese monks are educated.

9. *The relation to other forms of Buddhism: overlappings and boundaries*

As mentioned previously, the adherents of Theravāda Buddhism in Nepal come primarily from the Buddhist Newar population. It follows that not only the monks themselves have been moulded by this tradition in a certain sense, but also that they must conform to the realities of this social tradition in their mission activities. Thus the points of contact observed by R. C. Tewari are explained: the use of the Svayambhu hill as the site for preaching and for the construction of the first Theravāda monastery, the use of the traditional Buddhist Gūṃlā Dharma festival for religious activities of the Theravādins, and the like.[49] With the previously mentioned *pravrajyā* rite conferred for a specific period, the link is made with the Newar tradition of the *bare chuyegu*, or rather the attempt is made to replace it by the former. Recently there have also been efforts to replace the traditional initiatory rites for girls (*bārhāy tayegu*) by a so-called *ṛṣiṇī*-ordination of the Theravādins.

The first modern biography of the Buddha in Newari bears the title *Lalitavistara*. It was composed, as previously mentioned, by Mahāprajñā and published initially in the year 2484 according to Buddhist reckoning (1940/41). While the title refers to a famous Mahāyāna text important for traditional Newar Buddhism, the work, in content, is oriented entirely to the traditions of Theravāda Buddhism, i.e. to Pali literature, and may be taken to be an account of the Buddha's biography in conscious opposition to that of traditional Newar Buddhism.

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49. R. C. Tewari, "Socio-Cultural Aspects" (see note 31), pp. 81ff.

To postulate a syncretistic nature of Nepalese Theravāda Buddhism from such links would be, according to our observations, a fundamental error. On the whole, Nepalese Theravāda Buddhism is relatively untouched by syncretistic elements. We have been unable to detect in Nepal any fundamental concessions to the traditions of folk religion. The single element of ritualism in the Theravāda Buddhism of Nepal is the *paritrāṇa*, i.e. the *paritta* ceremony well known to all Theravāda countries. It is carried out in a form based on the Buddhist tradition of Sri Lanka and may be taken, in the full sense of the word, to be orthodox, even if not canonical. For the rest, however, Nepalese Theravāda Buddhism is defined by rationalistic and modernistic modes of thought. It is the very picture of contrast to Newar Buddhism, with which it must necessarily coexist, but to which it makes only unwilling concessions.

The monks and nuns of Theravāda Buddhism are usually only allowed the use of the *vihāras* of traditional Newar Buddhism with the stipulation that the Vajrācāryas continue to be permitted to perform their traditional rites in front of the stupas and statues of these groups of buildings. The monks accept this but do not take part themselves. In one case we were able to determine that, for their rituals at the stupa, the officiating Vajrācāryas have replaced the traditional Sanskrit texts by the recitation of Pali texts in use in Theravāda Buddhism.

It is quite apparent that syncretistic tendencies are much more widespread among the laity than among the monks. Although only relatively little information on the subject is yet available to us, one may still say that even for those Newar lay persons who have come under the spiritual sway of Theravāda Buddhism, the strong involvement in the traditional social order as defined by the ritual of Newar Buddhism would not admit of an abrupt "dropping out" of this order. Nor do the monks demand this of the laity, but, with the support of some of the latter, they seek forms of their own by which the traditional ritual can be replaced. We have already mentioned the short term ordination and the *ṛṣiṇī*-ordination as examples. Some other rituals can be replaced by the *paritta*, which can be recited, in the form of the *mahāparitrāṇa*, by large groups of monks or, at home, by individual Theravāda adherents.

In this connection the example of a Newar nun may be mentioned who converted from Tibetan to Theravāda Buddhism. Since she had already been a nun in a Tibetan monastery, she had become so accustomed to certain ritual acts, e.g. the use of the "rosary" (*akṣamālā*), that she could not forthwith abandon the practice. Now, the rosary is by no means unknown in Theravāda countries and, particularly in Burma, is even widespread. Our nun, however, was admonished by her fellow nuns to give up such behaviour unbecoming to a Theravāda adherent. From this example, too, the particular mental attitude of Nepalese Theravādin women becomes very clear.

The same applies to the stupa cult. The Theravādins revere the Lankā-caitya at Ānandakuṭīvihāra, in which a Buddha relic brought from Sri Laṅka to Nepal is deposited. On the other hand, the monks and nuns of Theravāda Buddhism take part but little in the cult of the traditional stupas, including Svayambhunath and Bodhnath, and when they do revere these stupas, they do so not, as we were told, in the same way as the Newar Buddhists and the Tibetan Buddhists. Still, it is the stupa cult where points of contact with traditional Newar Buddhism are probably most likely to be observed. The Tibetan Buddhists, for their part, have included the Laṅkācaitya in the list of their pilgrimage sites. It is contained in a list of sacred sites of the Kathmandu Valley published for Tibetan pilgrims,[50] and we have repeatedly observed lamas in *pradakṣiṇā* around this stupa.

One can observe elsewhere influences of Theravāda Buddhism on the traditional Buddhism of Nepal. Thus the most solemn holy day of the Theravādins, the Buddhist Vesak festival, though previously unknown in Nepal, has come to be observed by the other Buddhists. Vesak processions in which not only Theravāda monks but also Newar Buddhists and Lamas take part occur everywhere in areas inhabited by Buddhists. The chronology of the Theravāda Buddhists, according to which the year of the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha is set at 544 B.C., has gained acceptance among all Buddhists of Nepal. Individual Tibetan Buddhists, on the example of the Theravādins, have resumed the practice, largely forgotten in Tibetan Buddhism, of going around for alms.

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50. Bur-sras-pa Rin-chen Dar-lo, *gNas bšad ṅo mtshar gtam gyi rol mo*, 1984, p. 13.

The new Buddhist movement issuing from the Theravādins has been recognised by the Newar Buddhists as a challenge, and that challenge has been accepted. For several years now several Newar Buddhists have been engaged in publishing activities which they hope will be competitive with the Theravāda activities in this field. They defend Newar Buddhism from the charge of being a "corrupt" form of Buddhism.

1o. *The outlook*

The preceding series of discussions are the preliminary results of short, though intensive studies carried out by us in the Kathmandu Valley in, for the most part, the course of 1986. Only a portion of the phenomena observed could be mentioned. Much awaits a more detailed investigation, e.g. the question of the internal structure and the practical functioning of common gatherings and undertakings of adherents of the various forms of Buddhism, the extent to which the customs deriving from folk religion have been supplanted, details concerning the characteristics of the *paritrāṇa* ceremony in Nepal, the particulars of the development of the order's bylaws, the role of vegetarianism, the forms in which meditational techniques have been adopted, details concerning the choice of literature made from the Theravāda countries and the motivation for this choice, an investigation of the *jñānamālās*, i.e. the literature of Buddhist song, the question of the historical consciousness of Nepal's Theravādins and the conception they have of history, and many further problems.

With all due caution, however, the following seems to stand out as the first result: The Theravāda Buddhism of Nepal is not a marginal phenomenon but has introduced, rather, a profound change in the consciousness and self-image of almost all of Nepal's Buddhists, whether through direct conversion or through its indirect influence. Whereas strongly syncretistic tendencies have correctly been identified as the outstanding feature of the traditional religious life in Nepal, Theravāda Buddhism represents, as it were, a picture of contrast to the country's traditional religiosity: not time-honoured ritual but preaching, not the simple acceptance of received mythological notions of the sacred but abstract religious doctrines as well-grounded as possible, not the traditional ceremony of the community but the practice of meditation, not the embedding of religious life into

the community of caste and extended family but the making of personal and free religious decisions, the emphasis upon the ethical behaviour of the individual as the central concern of Buddhist religiosity, the critical examination of the inherited social and political order, a stronger propensity, on the whole, to rational modes of thought and debate, and a pronounced distaste for the inherited image cults of traditional religion: these are some of the salient features within this picture of contrasts. When we began our studies, we expected to come across in Nepal a development similar to what can be observed in Java. There it is possible to talk of "intra-Buddhistic syncretism".[51] By this is meant the tendency to fuse the doctrines and concepts of the various forms of Buddhism with one another and to bring about a new synthesis. The expectation of finding something similar in Nepal has not been realised. Thus we had assumed that the site of Ānandakuṭīvihāra, Nepal's oldest and most important Theravāda monastery, on the Svayambhu hill would indicate a tendency of the Svayambhu cult to be incorporated into Theravāda Buddhism. In fact, nothing of the sort has happened. The site of the *vihāra* is most probably to be explained in terms of the strategy of mission work, as Svayambhu is traditionally considered the most sacred Buddhist place in the Kathmandu Valley.

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51. Heinz Bechert, "The Buddhayāna of Indonesia: A Syncretistic Form of Theravāda", *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 9 (1981), pp. 14f.