

Titthiyaparivāsa vis-à-vis Noviciation in Theravādin Monasticism

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Abstract

Titthiyaparivāsa is a particular type of probation in Theravādin monasticism that former ascetics of other heretic groups must undergo if they wish to gain admission to the Buddhist Order. In the extant probation procedure as found in the Pali Vinaya tradition, there is no explicit accounting for the stage of novicehood. Why? This paper attempts to answer that question and incidentally also discovers an unexpected insight into the legally ambiguous status of noviciation.

1 Introduction

Titthiyaparivāsa is a particular type of probation in Theravādin monasticism:

[It] pertains to persons who, having been previously members of any other heretic group, latterly seek admission to the Buddhist Order. Every such person is put under probation for a specified period of four months during which he must conduct himself honourably to the satisfaction of the Bhikkhus in authority. (Dhirasekera 217)

In the extant Vinaya texts, we can see a detailed procedure of how a former ascetic of non-Buddhist schools can get ordination in the Buddhist Order (Vin I 69–71; Horner 4: 85–89). It can be summarized as follows:

1. Such a candidate should have his hair and beard shaved, cover himself with yellow robes, have his upper robe on one shoulder, salute the feet of monks, sit on his haunches, and declare his taking refuge in the Triple Gem.
2. He should approach the Saṅgha and make a formal request for *upasampadā* (“ordination”).

3. Then the Saṅgha should hold a formal Saṅgha function (*saṅghakamma*) to put him on probation for four months, during which monks would observe him:
 - a) If he abstains from entering the village too early and coming back too late.
 - b) If he abstains from frequenting the improper places: a) a place of prostitutes b) that of widows c) that of spinsters d) that of gays e) that of nuns.
 - c) If he has, as regards his duties towards other fellow Brahma-farers, dexterity, vigor, know-how, the ability to manage himself or direct others.
 - d) If he has high motivation in learning and discussing the higher morality, the higher thought, the higher wisdom.
 - e) If he is pleased by the criticism of his former sect.
 - f) If he is displeased by the criticism of the Triple Gem.
 - g) If he is displeased by the praise of his former sect.
 - h) If he is pleased by the praise of the Triple Gem.
4. If he succeeds in all those factors, he should be given full ordination.¹

The procedure itself as summarized above is clear enough, but we should note that noviciation is entirely not mentioned throughout the whole procedure. Why? Are such candidates exempt from, or ineligible for, noviciation? I will attempt to answer this question in this paper. First I will discuss Buddhaghosa's answer and Dhirasekera's criticism; then I will use a different approach to provide a plausible answer.

2 Buddhaghosa's Answer and Dhirasekera's Criticism

paṭhamam kesamassunti ādinā tassa ādito'va sāmaṇerapabbajjam dasseti. (Sp V 991)

With the statement "Firstly, hair and beard ...", etc., (The Buddha) indicates his (i. e. the candidate's) going forth as a novice at the very beginning.

¹**The type of ordination conferred upon former alien ascetics:** Pali records maintain that the ordination procedure used to initiate people into the monastic order has evolved, during the Buddha's lifetime, through three stages: (a) the stage of *ehi bhikkhu*, the Buddha's personal invitation that means "Come, O monk". (Vin I 12; Horner 4: 18–20) (b) the stage of *tisaraṇagamana*, the candidate's avowal of faith in Triple Refuge (Vin I 21; Horner 4: 29–30) (c) the stage of *ñatticatutthakamma*, a monastic procedure performed by the Saṅgha community itself (Vin I 55–56; Horner 4: 71–72). So which type of ordination was prevailing when this procedure came to be established?

It is probably safe to answer that it must be the last type, the ordination by *ñatticatutthakamma* because:

- a) The first step of the probation procedure is identical with the ordination by *tisaraṇagamana* (Vin I 21; Horner 4: 29–30), clearly indicating that the latter is no longer the norm for full ordination.
- b) Probation is to be conferred by a formal *Saṅgha* function (*saṅghakamma*), so we can infer that the full ordination, the objective itself of probation, would also require an act as serious if not more.

As shown above, Buddhaghosa maintains that the extant probation procedure does account for noviciation, that is, the first step of the probation procedure is actually taking on novicehood. However the Mv text does not explicitly say so. Then what are the grounds for this interpretation? Obviously as follows:

1. The initial statement of the whole procedure mentions both *pabbajjā* and *upasampadā* as follows:

yo bhikkhave añño pi aññatitthiyapubbo imasiṃ dhammavinaye ākaṅkhati pabbajjaṃ, ākaṅkhati upasampadaṃ, tassa cattāro māse parivāso dātabbo. [Emphasis added] (Vin I 69)

But, monks, whoever else was formerly a member of another sect and *desires the going forth* in this *dhamma* [sic.] and discipline and *desires ordination*, to him you should grant probation for four months. [Emphasis added] (Horner 4: 85)

2. The first step for granting probation is identical with the procedure for conferring novicehood (Vin I 82; Horner 4: 103–104).
3. With all other stages, only full ordination is mentioned, not the novicehood.

If one understands *pabbajjā* in (1) as noviciation, one must somehow account for noviciation in the procedure. And the only feasible way to do so seems to be treating the first step as an act of taking on novicehood. The fact that Buddhaghosa has actually done so shows that he does understand *pabbajjā* in (1) as noviciation.

However such interpretation has apparently raised a serious problem when he has to deal with the typical Sutta statement describing such probation procedures:

Yo kho Seniya aññatitthiyapubbo imasmiṃ dhammavinaye ākaṅkhati pabbajjaṃ, ākaṅkhati upasampadaṃ, so cattāro māse parivasati. Catunnaṃ māsānaṃ accayena āraddhacittā bhikkhū pabbājenti upasampādenti bhikkhubhāvāya. [Emphasis added] (MN I 391)²
Seniya! a former member of other schools, seeking the *going-forth and ordination* in this Dhamma and Vinaya, stays four months on probation. At the end of four months, monks *whose minds are conciliated*³ let (him) go forth, and get (him) ordained for the status of monkhood.

In the sutta text above, the Buddha describes the general procedure that former ascetics of non-Buddhist schools must follow if they wish for full ordination in the Buddhist Order. And we can see clearly therein that *pabbajjā* (“going forth”) and *upasampadā*

²Texts identical with this except the candidate’s name can be found at (DN I 176; SN II 21; Sn 102, etc.)

³Walshe translates *āraddhacittā* as “who are established in mind” (269) and explains it as “i. e., properly qualified” (574) and *Dialogues* renders it as “exalted in spirit” (Rhys Davids and Rhys Davids 2: 168). But see (Pandita 4) for the correct rendition and comments.

(“ordination”) come only after probation. If *pabbajjā* here means noviciation too, it will clearly conflict with Buddhaghosa’s interpretation in Sp, according to which noviciation takes place at the very beginning of probation.

Anyhow he tries to deal with that problem as follows:

Tattha pabbajjanti vacanasiliṭṭhatāvasena vuttam. Aparivasitvā yeva hi pabbajjam labhati. upasampadatthikena pana na atikālena gāmapavesanādāni aṭṭhavattāni pūrentena parivasitabbam. (Ps III 106)

In the speech *yo kho Seniya aññatitthiyapubbo*, etc., the term *pabbajjam* is mentioned by virtue of the adherence of speech.⁴ In fact, (one) gets *pabbajjā* without undergoing probation. One wishing for *upasampadā*, on the other hand, should undergo probation by fulfilling eight practices of not going into the village beyond proper time, etc.

From the statement “In fact, (one) gets *pabbajjā* without undergoing probation” (*Aparivasitvā yeva hi pabbajjam labhati*), we can infer that Buddhaghosa understands *pabbajjā* here as noviciation; this is why he attempts to dismiss it “out of the context as having no meaning of its own” (Dhirasekera 220) so that no contradiction can arise between the Sutta and Vinaya traditions.

Dhirasekera is the first to notice Buddhaghosa’s interpretation resulting in the apparent difference between the Vinaya and Sutta traditions and he observes as follows:

On a careful examination of the above two versions of the Titthiyaparivāsa as they appear in the Sutta and Vinaya Piṭakas, we notice a considerable difference between them. ... This statement of the Sutta version is clear enough on the point that both *pabbajjā* and *upasampadā* come after the period of Parivāsa [“probation”] ... (219)

The details of Khandhakas [in Vinaya Piṭaka] on this point place the Parivāsa on the newcomer after his admission as a *sāmaṇera*. (220)

However he is not convinced by Buddhaghosa’s attempt to dismiss *pabbajjā* and accordingly he notes:

In this attempt to read into the Suttas an apparently subsequent tradition of the Khandhakas, we see the commentator striving to accord with the tradition of the Vinaya which, in course of time, seems to have overstepped some of the traditions of the Suttas on these monastic matters. (220–221)

To sum up the different positions of Buddhaghosa and Dhirasekera:

⁴The Pali term *siliṭṭha* has the Skt. form *śliṣṭa*, of which one sense Apte gives is “Clung, adherence to” (Apte *śliṣṭa*). Then *vacanasiliṭṭhatāvasena* should be literally translated as “by virtue of the adherence of speech”. What Buddhaghosa appears to mean is that *pabbajjā* and *upasampadā* are commonly used together so *pabbajjā* also appears here on account of habitual usage, not because it is really meant.

1. Both Buddhaghosa and Dhirasekera agree in understanding noviciation by the term *pabbajjā* in the probation procedure of Vinaya, and subsequently in interpreting its first step as taking on noviciation.
2. They also agree in literally understanding noviciation by *pabbajjā* which comes in the Sutta texts only after probation.
3. However they differ in the manner of interpreting *pabbajjā* in Sutta texts. Buddhaghosa counts it out of context as having no real significance while Dhirasekera thinks that it shows a considerable difference between the Sutta and Vinaya traditions.

However I do not agree with both of them because:

1. It is questionable whether it is correct to interpret, as both of them do, the first step of the probation procedure as taking on noviciation. For the Mv text does not mention anything explicit to this effect. Besides, if a person under probation is a novice, he should also be checked whether he sincerely observes the precepts prescribed for novices. Yet these precepts are not counted as factors observable by monks (See the section [1]).

Here we may be tempted to argue that novice precepts can be counted as part of the factor (d), that is, whether “he has high motivation in learning and discussing the higher morality, etc.” and accordingly need not be mentioned. But this argument does not hold water, for the Buddha had no reason not to mention the novice precepts if every candidate must be a novice.

2. They have seemingly been forced to interpret the first step of the probation procedure as taking on novicehood only because they understand noviciation as the sense of *pabbajjā* occurring at the very beginning of the procedure. However, as we will see in the section (3.2), this term does not always mean noviciation in Vinaya.
3. Even if they were correct in asserting that the first step of probation is to take on noviciation, it would have led to contradiction between the Sutta and Vinaya traditions only when we chose, as both of them do, to interpret the term *pabbajjā* in the Sutta texts as the legal term for noviciation. That is, only then it will imply that noviciation takes place at the beginning of the probation according to the Vinaya tradition while it will come only after probation according to the Sutta tradition—an obvious contradiction.

However *pabbajjā* in the Sutta tradition does not always mean noviciation, as we will see in the section (3.2).

4. And I find it difficult to accept as real the difference between the Vinaya and Sutta traditions as Dhirasekera claims. Why? We should not forget that the maintainers of both Vinaya and Sutta traditions are monks belonging to the same Theravadin school and for them, it must have been a common experience to see the members of other religious sects getting converted and ordained in the Order. If there were really a wide difference between two traditions regarding the ordination of such converts, it would have certainly produced a schism in the Order. However, there is no historical record of such an event. So this ostensible difference seems only to indicate that there must be something wrong with how the texts themselves are understood.

Therefore I have attempted to use a different approach as follows.

3 An Alternative Approach

In Mv, the topic of probation for former alien ascetics comes before the topic of noviciation. Assuming that this fact is chronologically significant and taking also into account the fact that noviciation is entirely not mentioned in the probation procedure, I hypothesize that noviciation did not exist yet when this probation procedure was established. According to this hypothesis, the extant probation procedure should be interpreted as “it is”.

Then the first step of the procedure is meant not to confer novicehood upon the candidate but rather to make him appear like a monk so that he can live together with monks who will observe and evaluate him during the probation period. During that period, he is neither a monk nor a novice; he is only a person under probation, no more, no less. This is also the reason why novice precepts are not mentioned as factors to be observed.

Now, if this hypothesis is to work, we need to answer two inevitable questions:

1. How should we account for the role of noviciation, after it has been established, in the picture of the probation procedure?
2. How should we interpret *pabbajjā* that appears at the beginning of probation in Vinaya and that which comes at the end of probation in the Sutta texts?

I will attempt to answer these questions one by one.

3.1 Noviciation vis-à-vis the Probation Procedure

I argue that there is *no need* to account for the status of noviciation regarding the probation procedure for former alien ascetics, because noviciation is not a legally compulsory

step towards ordination nor is probation necessary for former ascetics if they aspire to novicehood only. To elaborate:

1. Noviciation appears to have never been a legally compulsory step towards ordination, which we can infer from the fact that *Pali sources nowhere mention novicehood as a requirement for full ordination* (See Vin I 85–91; Horner 4: 108–115), even though the custom of direct ordination might have disappeared in real practice after the noviciate system had been introduced.
2. Probation appears not necessary for novicehood because:
 - a) Former asceticism in another school is never mentioned as a factor in judging a would-be novice. (See Vin I 91; Horner 4: 115–116)
 - b) Novicehood itself can be viewed as a sort of probation, for novices are not full-fledged members of the Order and always have to live under the supervision of monks.

Therefore I cannot see any reason for dealing with noviciation in the extant probation procedure. However, it does not mean that former alien ascetics are not eligible for novicehood, for there is *no rule* in the Pali Vinaya to force ordination upon a candidate if he is content with novicehood only. Therefore we can deduce from this hypothesis three legally possible paths for a former ascetic to achieve ordination in the Order:

1. A candidate can follow the path exactly described in the probation procedure to bypass the novice stage and get direct ordination.
2. Or he can officially become a novice first and request for probation. (In his case, the first step of the probation will actually be taking on the novicehood just as Buddhaghosa and Dhīrasekera maintain.) Then he would be observed not only regarding the factors officially stated in the procedure but also regarding his observance of novice precepts. If he can satisfy the observer monks on both accounts, he can get ordained at the end of the probation.

Here we may be tempted to object that novice precepts are not parts of the factors to be observed. However, at a time when the novice status has already been established, monks can choose to interpret these precepts as part of the factor (d) (“higher morality”, etc.). As the observing monks have the final authority to give or deny ordination to a candidate, they will certainly be not “conciliated” if a candidate does not care for novice precepts despite his novicehood.

3. Or he can go through the exact probation procedure and at its end, he can choose to get novicehood first and ordination later.

Then which path has the highest probability to be in real practice at the Buddha's time? If we look at the conditions that have forced the status of novicehood on certain candidates to monkhood, we can see that these were their youth and immaturity (Vin I 78–79; Horner 4: 98–99), which would not usually be the case for those who had already been ascetics in other schools. Therefore I believe that it was the path (1) which was in actual practice during the Buddha's times. In other words, they usually bypassed the novice stage and got direct ordination after undergoing the probation procedure.

3.2 The Sense and Usage of Pabbajjā

In the typical probation procedures (See 2), the terms *pabbajjā* and *upasampadā* are usually found together. Therefore I believe we should consider these terms together to get their senses appropriate to such contexts.

First I would look at the non-religious senses of those terms, from which I would attempt to see how legal senses have evolved in Vinaya. *Pabbajjā* has the Skt. form *pravrajyā*, among the senses of which "Immigration, going abroad" (Apte *pravrajyā*) is closest to that of the Pali form, which is usually rendered as "going forth". On the other hand, *upasampadā* means "arrival, coming to" because it is derived from *upa + sam + √pad*, which means "1. To come to, to arrive at ... 2. To get, to obtain" (*upasampad*).

Suppose we meet these two terms together in a certain context, in which *pabbajjā* means "going abroad" and *upasampadā* means "arrival in the foreign country destined for". Then we can find three facts as regards the relationship between these two terms:

1. When there is no real distance intervening between the departure and destination points, like in the case of one just crossing the border between two adjacent countries, *pabbajjā* and *upasampadā* are two facets of the same event.
2. When there is a real distance between the departure and destination points, *pabbajjā* technically covers *upasampadā* and more, that is, *pabbajjā* will cover the whole state that starts when one leaves, and ends when one comes back into, the borders of one's own country, whereas *upasampadā* will mean the state which will begin only when one lands in the country destined for, and will end as soon as one leaves its borders.
3. The term *upasampadā* always implies *pabbajjā* because one cannot "arrive" in a foreign country without "going abroad".

Then, in the context of Vinaya, *pabbajjā* will naturally mean "leaving one's original environment". In the case of Yasa (Vin I 15–18; Horner 4: 21–26), for example, it would mean giving up a lay person's life and environment while in the case of Pañcavaggiya monks (Vin I 12–13; Horner 4: 18–19), who were already ascetics when they were converted, it would mean giving up their former beliefs, practices and institutions. On the

other hand, *upasampadā* will come to mean “getting a full-fledged membership in the Order”.

Now we have to consider the relationship of these two terms when they occur together in the Vinaya context. Here also we can find similar facts:

1. For those who got directly ordained without passing through the novice stage, *pabbajjā* and *upasampadā* are two different aspects of the same event. For such persons direct ordination means both giving up their former state of laity or different religious beliefs as well as gaining full membership in the Order.

atha kho āyasmā Aññātakonḍañño ... bhagavantam etad avoca: labheyyāhaṃ bhante bhagavato santike pabbajjam [Emphasis added] labheyyam upasampadan ti. (Vin I 12)

Then the venerable Aññāta Koṇḍañña ... spoke thus to the Lord: “May I, Lord, receive the *going forth* [Emphasis added] in the Lord’s presence, may I receive ordination?” (Horner 4: 18)

The Buddhist Order was born with the ordination of the venerable Aññāta Koṇḍañña, at the time of which noviciation was still unheard of. Yet when he requested the Buddha for ordination, he used the term *pabbajjā*, which certainly must refer to ordination, not noviciation.

anujānāmi bhikkhave tumheva dāni tāsū-tāsū disāsū tesu-tesu janapadesu pabbā-jetha upasampādettha. evañ ca pana bhikkhave pabbājetabbo upasampādetabbo ... anujānāmi bhikkhave imehi tīhi saraṇagamanehi pabbajjam upasampadan ti. [Emphasis added] (Vin I 22)

“I allow, monks, that you yourselves may now *let go forth*, may ordain in any quarter, in any district. And thus, monks, should one *let go forth*, should one ordain: ... I allow, monks, the *going forth* and the ordination by these three goings for refuge.” (Horner 4: 30)

When the Buddha permitted monks to give ordination by means of the Triple Refuge formula (*tisaraṇagamanūpasampadā*), noviciation did not exist yet. However we can see here the Buddha using the term *pabbajjā* and its variants (*pabbā-jetha, pabbājetabbo*) to refer to that particular type of ordination.

2. When there are two distinct stages of renunciation, i. e., noviciation and ordination, the term *pabbajjā* technically covers *upasampadā* and *more*, that is, *pabbajjā* will cover the state beginning from the noviciation and ending at death or, if one chooses, coming back to lay life whereas *upasampadā* will cover the state beginning from the ordination up to death or, if one chooses, giving up the ordained status to become a novice or a lay person.

One Sutta example of *pabbajjā* meaning the general state of being a recluse instead of the specific state of novicehood is as follows:

Yassa kassaci bhikkhave bhikkhuno abhijjhālussa abhijjhā appahīnā hoti, ... imesaṃ kho ahaṃ bhikkhave samaṇamalānaṃ ... appahānā na samaṇasāmīcipaṭipadaṃ paṭipanno ti vadāmi. Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, matajaṃ nāma āvudhajātaṃ ubhatodhāraṃ pūtanisitaṃ. Tadassa saṅghāṭiyā sampārutaṃ sampaliveṭṭhitāṃ. Tathūpamaṃhaṃ, bhikkhave, imassa bhikkhuno pabbajjaṃ vadāmi. (MN I 281)

O monks, whoever monk is covetous and has (his) covetousness not yet abandoned ... has not practised the way proper to recluses, I say, because of his failure to abandon these stains of a recluse ... Monks, by way of simile, there is a type of weapon named *mataja*, double-edged, golden-coloured and well-whetted. Suppose such a weapon is well-wrapped and well-covered by an outer (monastic) cloak. I say such a monk's going forth is comparable to that (i. e., a deadly weapon wrapped in robes).⁵

In the quoted text above, the term *bhikkhuno* refers to a fully-ordained monk, and *pabbajjā* in this context clearly refers to his *present* state of being a recluse, not the *past* state of noviciation.

On the other hand, one example from Vinaya is as follows:

⁵A sword wrapped in robes or kept in a sheath? Cf.: "For so long as a bhikkhu who is covetous has not abandoned covetousness, ... for so long he does not practise the way proper to the recluse, I say, because of his failure to abandon these stains for the recluse ... Suppose the weapon called a *mataja*, well whetted on both edges, were enclosed and encased in a patchwork sheath. I say such a bhikkhu's going forth is comparable to that." (Ñāṇamoḷi and Bodhi 372–373)

I do not understand why they have rendered *yassa kassaci* as "so long as". For the indeclinable *ci* (Skt. *cit*) is "a particle added to *kiṃ* and its derivatives ... to impart to them an indefinite sense; *kuṭracit* somewhere; *kecit* some & c." (Apte s. v. *cit*); so *kassaci bhikkhuno* means "any monk" while the relative pronoun *yassa* will be correlated to the definite pronoun *so*, the implicit subject of *paṭipanno*. Therefore the long sentence *Yassa kassaci ... paṭipanno ti vadāmi* simply shows the Buddha's statement that any monk having failed to discard such defilements has failed to practise properly.

And when they render *saṅghāṭiyā* as "patchwork sheath", they are simply following the commentary: *saṅghāṭiyā ti vāsīyā* (Ps I 325) ("*saṅghāṭiyā* means 'by a sheath'"). However, its Skt. counterpart (*saṅghāṭi* or *saṅghāṭī*) means only "a kind of garment, a monk's robe" (Monier-Williams *saṃ-ghāṭa*), which perfectly agrees with the following Vinaya text:

Anujānāmi bhikkhave ticvāraṃ diguṇaṃ saṅghāṭiṃ, ekacciyaṃ uttarāsaṅgaṃ, ekacciyaṃ antaravāsakaṃ ti. (Vin I 289)

I allow you, monks, three robes: a double outer cloak, a single upper robe, a single inner robe. (Horner 4: 411)

And it also agrees with the text that follows in the same sutta:

Nāhaṃ bhikkhave saṅghāṭikassa saṅghāṭidhāraṇamattena sāmāññaṃ vadāmi. (MN I 281)

I do not say that the recluse's status comes about in a patchwork-cloak wearer through the mere wearing of the patch-work cloak ... (Ñāṇamoḷi and Bodhi 373)

Therefore I simply understand *saṅghāṭiyā* here as a monastic robe. Then the sentence *Tadassa saṅghāṭiyā*, etc., refers to a weapon wrapped in robes. The whole simile, then, means the Buddha is comparing a monk unable to discard defilements to a sword wrapped in monastic robes— outwardly harmless and peaceful but dangerous at the inner core. The simile interpreted in this way appears to be more effective.

*anujānāmi bhikkhave upasampādentena cattāro nissaye ācikkhituṃ: ... rukkhamūla-
senāsanam nissāya pabbajjā, tattha te yāvajīvam ussāho karaṇīyo ... (Vin I 58)*

I allow you, monks, when you are ordaining, to explain four resources: ...
That going forth (exists) depending upon⁶a lodging at the root of a tree; in
this respect effort is to be made by you for life.

The quoted text above is meant in this context for a candidate to ordination, so the
term *pabbajjā* therein must mean the general state of recluseship, not the specific
state of novicehood.

3. The term *upasampadā* always implies *pabbajjā* because one cannot gain a full-fledged
membership in the Order without giving up the former environment of laity or
non-Buddhist asceticism.

Now does it mean that it is not justifiable to interpret *pabbajjā* as the intermediate stage
of noviciation (*sāmaṇerapabbajjā*), like Buddhaghosa and Dhirasekera do? It is in fact
justifiable in some contexts where the state of *upasampadā* must surely be counted out.
One example in Vinaya will be as follows:

*na upasampādetabbakavāsativāraṃ niṭṭhitam ... na pabbājetabbadvattimsavāraṃ niṭṭhi-
tam. (Vin I 91)*

Told is the Portion on Twenty (Cases) where one should not ordain ... (Horner 4:
115)

Told is the Portion on Thirty-two (Cases) where one should not let go forth (4: 116)

As shown above, after the section on non-ordainable persons comes the section on
persons disqualified for going forth. The only way to prevent confusing these two
categories is to interpret “going forth” here as referring to noviciation only.

In Sutta texts, on the other hand, *pabbajjā* in the following verse clearly means novi-
ciation only:

*Satthā ca maṃ paṭiggayha, ānandaṃ etad abravi;
Pabbājehi imaṃ khippaṃ, hessaty ājāniyo ayaṃ (Th 476)*

And the teacher receiving me said this to Ānanda, “Send him forth quickly; this
one will be a throughbred.” (Norman 49)

Why? The following verses show how the Buddha went into the temple after letting
Bhadda go forth, how he achieved liberation before sunset, and how the Buddha came

⁶*Nissāya* meaning “on account of” or “depending upon”? Horner translates *nissāya* as “on account
of” (4: 75). It means that a candidate is attracted to monkhood by these four resources of living un-
der a tree, etc., which certainly does not suit the context here. On the other hand, *nissāya* has the
Skt. counterpart *niśrāya*, which is a gerund derived from *ni* √*śri* meaning “to lean on or against”
(Monier-Williams *niśri*). Therefore the correct rendition of *nissāya* should be, “depending upon” or
“being dependent upon”, etc.

out of his solitary meditation to invite him “Come, Bhadda”, which is his ordination (Th 477–478; Norman 49). Therefore “sending forth” that occurred before the Buddha’s entrance into the temple must certainly mean noviciation.

And we cannot complain of inconsistency here; just as the term *soldier* in the phrase “generals and soldiers” can refer to lower-rank soldiers even though generals are technically also *soldiers*, so also can *pabbajjā* refer to the intermediate stage of noviciation in some contexts even though *upsampadā* is also technically covered by the state of *pabbajjā*. But I have already shown above that this is not always the case.

Now it is time to consider the sense of *pabbajjā* and *upasampadā* in the probation procedures as depicted in Vinaya and Sutta texts. I have already shown how Buddhaghosa and Dhirasekera interpret these terms and how their interpretation has led to an apparent contradiction between these two text traditions. Therefore what I am giving now is the sense of the terms in accord with my hypothesis, which maintains that, at the Buddha’s time, former ascetics aspiring to monkhood in the Buddhist Order usually bypassed the novice stage to be directly ordained after probation.

First of all, we should look at the procedure in Vinaya. Herein both the terms *pabbajjā* and *upasampadā* appear at the very beginning of the procedure, as part of the Buddha’s description of a candidate as one who was “formerly a member of another sect and desires *pabbajjā* in this Dhamma and discipline and desires *upasampadā*.” Because noviciation is not involved here, *pabbajjā* will refer to the candidate’s formal withdrawal from his old ascetic school yet *upasampadā* will refer to his achievement of fully ordained monkhood. Both these terms refer to his achievement of full ordination from different perspectives.

In the Sutta procedure, on the other hand, these terms in verbal forms (*pabbājenti* and *upasampādenti* respectively) appear at the end of probation, showing how a candidate successful in probation is promoted to become a monk. Therefore *pabbājenti* (“let (someone) go forth”) refers to the permission given by monks to the candidate for leaving the probationary status but *upasampādenti* (“get (someone) ordained”) refers to the monks’ conferment of ordination on the candidate. Here also both terms refer to the same event of ordination.

In short, I argue that there is no real contradiction between Vinaya and Sutta texts as far as the probation procedure of former alien ascetics is concerned.

4 Conclusion

I have argued that there is *no need* to account for noviciation in the extant probation procedure. This argument is partly based on the concept of novicehood being only a legally optional step towards full ordination for persons otherwise qualified. *Seen other way around, the extant probation procedure itself can be viewed as the proof of this concept.*

And this concept is actually not new. The Burmese monasticism has always believed that it is legally possible to directly ordain qualified lay persons even though it does culturally insist on all candidates' passing through the novice stage before ordination (I cannot comment on other traditions). If this concept is really sound, it might provide solutions to the legal problems as regards the Buddhist noviciate system. Which kind of problems?

Unlike for nuns, no probationary training was imposed on a man who wished to join the *Saṅgha*. So a youth under twenty could receive lower ordination (i. e, go forth), become a novice, and take higher ordination as soon as he reached twenty. But what happened if he was over twenty, normal and healthy, and had no need to undertake preliminary training? Did his going forth and ordination take place simultaneously through the *ñatticatutthakamma*? Or, following the changes which had taken place (*tīhi saraṇagamana* for *pabbajjā* and *ñatticatutthakamma* for *upasampadā*), did a man over twenty have to go through both stages? ... (Juo-Hsüeh 369)

With the questions above, Juo-Hsüeh Shih opens the Pandora's box as regards the legal ambiguity of the noviciate system (369–370). But all these problems are based upon the assumption that, per the finalised form of Pali Vinaya, novicehood is a legally compulsory step towards full ordination. However, when we abandon that assumption and view the novicehood as purely optional for persons otherwise qualified for ordination, there is no room left for ambiguity. If a youth is over twenty, normal, healthy and had no need to undertake preliminary training, whether to take on novicehood before ordination would be only a culturally dictated choice for him and his master, not a legal necessity.

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