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WASHING AND DYEING BUDDHIST MONASTIC ROBES

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Among the most striking identity markers of a Buddhist monastic community are the robes worn by its members. It is therefore not surprising that disciplinary (*vinaya*) texts contain a wealth of guidelines on robes, and that much research has been done on how to make and wear such robes. The present article focuses on a much less studied, yet equally essential, aspect: the care of monastic robes. As we will see, disciplinary texts are similarly informative on this issue, although in this instance the guidelines are scattered throughout the various chapters of the *vinaya*s. Taking care of one's robes involved washing and dyeing them properly, and many details are provided on exactly how to do both. The *vinaya*s offer a wealth of information on both the material culture of early Buddhist India and the monastic way to deal with the guidelines relating to robes. In sum, their rules provide an intriguing picture of how a Buddhist monastic community in India ideally took care of one of its most visible features – the monastic robe.

Key words: Buddhist monastic robe, Buddhist monks, *vinaya*, washing, dyeing.

1. Introduction

In a discussion on the social conventions of clothing, Gregory Schopen (1997, p. 65) aptly says, 'clothes are intimately linked with questions of identity'. This is no less true for Buddhist monks and nuns, all of whom are required to wear robes of certain shapes that immediately distinguish them from other religious communities as well as lay people. As Schopen further explains (1997, p. 70), robes should not only make the Buddhist community recognisable but should equally not display any 'unkempt appearance' that might be seen as 'disreputable' by lay donors. This latter point is the primary focus of this article. What is considered to be 'unkempt' or 'disreputable', and how might a monk or a nun avoid such an accusation?

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Much work has been done on the shape of monastic robes and how they should be worn.[1] Considerably less attention has been paid to the question of how to take care of these robes and, more particularly, how to keep them 'acceptable' and 'clean'. Should the robes be washed? If so, how? Are further procedures demanded, too? If so, what do these involve? As we will see, washing and cleaning are often closely connected to dyeing, so the latter will also be discussed at some depth.

1.1. Primary Sources

Our research focuses on early Indian Buddhism, which provides the basis for monastic guidelines in the Buddhist world. On the issue of cleaning robes, *vinaya* (or disciplinary) texts for monks (*bhikṣu*) and nuns (*bhikṣuṇī*) constitute the main sources. The core text of monastic discipline is a list of rules (*prātimokṣa*), introduced and discussed in detail in explanatory chapters, called *bhikṣu-* and *bhikṣuṇīvibhaṅga*s. At this point, it is important to note that the rules of the *prātimokṣa* developed gradually. According to tradition, a new rule was added each time a monk or a nun did something that was considered to be wrong. This process continued long after the demise of the Buddha, until, finally, the set of rules was finalised into a single text, possibly as a result of a process of identification and self-definition among the various *vinaya* schools.[2] However, it always remained very important for the Buddhist tradition to attribute each and every regulation to the Buddha himself. In this way, the *vinaya* texts came to be seen as normative guidelines, defining a Buddhist identity originating with the Buddha.

Apart from the *vibhaṅga*s, other chapters, traditionally called *skandhaka*s or *vastu*s, contain long expositions on procedures and numerous short guidelines on many aspects of monastic life, all similarly attributed to the Buddha. Taken together, the *bhikṣu-* and *bhikṣuṇīvibhaṅga*s and the *skandhaka*s/*vastu*s constitute what is generally called 'a full *vinaya*'. During the long development of the *vinaya* rules, various traditions, each defined by its own *vinaya*, came into being.[3] There are many similarities between these *vinaya*s, but they sometimes exhibit remarkable differences in practices, or in the interpretation of and attitudes towards these practices. Six of these full *vinaya*s survive to this day, most of them only in Chinese.[4] These are the Pāli

[1] See, among others, Kieschnick (1999 and 2003, pp. 86–107) and Guo (2001).

[2] See von Hinüber (1999, pp. 89–91) and Heirman (1999).

[3] It is uncertain when the *vinaya* schools came into being. The Buddhist texts traditionally place these developments at a time soon after the demise of the Buddha. The first inscriptions attesting to a geographical distribution of schools date from the 1st century CE. For a detailed overview of the evolution and spread of early schools, see, in particular, Kieffer-Pülz (2000, pp. 285–302).

[4] Apart from these six *vinaya*s, the chapter for nuns (*bhikṣuṇīvibhaṅga*) of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādins, preserved in a transitional language between Prākrit and Sanskrit (Roth 1970, pp. lv–lvi), is also extant. It has never been translated into Chinese.

vinaya (extant in the Pāli language only)[5] and, in chronological order of translation into Chinese: the *Shisong lü* 十誦律 (T.1435; *Sarvāstivādavinaya*), the *Sifen lü* 四分律 (T.1428; *Dharmaguptakavinaya*), the *Mohesengqi lü* 摩訶僧祇律 (T.1425; *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*), the *Mishasai bu hexi wufen lü* 彌沙塞部和醯五分律 (T.1421; *Mahīśāsakavinaya*) (all translated in the 5th century) and the *Genbenshuoyiqieyou bu pinaiye* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶 (TT.1442–1451; *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*) (translated in the 8th century).[6]

As I recently discussed in a study on monastic bodily care (Heirman–Torck 2012, pp. 10–13), it would be wrong to consider *vinaya* texts as first-hand accounts by Buddhist authors. On the other hand, one should not be overly dismissive of them, either. The objects mentioned in the *vinaya*s must have been known to their compilers/authors as well as to their readers and audiences. The same can be said for the ideas and practices relating to these objects, which reveal the ways in which monastic masters wanted practitioners to behave. Although the *vinaya* texts might not always express what monastics and lay people actually did or even believed – so one has to be careful not to interpret them as direct reflections of historical reality – they do provide information on practices that were at least imaginable to their readers.

Indeed, the *vinaya* texts serve as a dual source of valuable information. On the one hand, the disciplinary rules provide readers with a normative basis, an ideal monastic setting, identifying the Buddhist community. To quote Shayne Clarke (2009, p. 36), "Indian Buddhist monastic law codes provide us with rich insights into how the canonical authors/redactors, the monastic lawmakers, envisaged the Indian Buddhist experience". On the other hand, the same texts refer to numerous objects and practices, termed 'incidental' by Jan Nattier (2003, pp. 63–69). As mentioned above, at the very least readers must have been able to imagine these items and what the monks and nuns did with them, so they offer interesting insights into daily life in early India, even though, as Nattier acknowledges, the lack of archaeological evidence and the impossibility of locating the texts precisely in time and space inevitably limit the scope of our research.[7]

1.2. Material Culture

As a study of practices and attitudes relating to monastic clothing, this research focuses on material culture in daily life.[8] The body plays a major role in everyday life,

[5] A Theravāda *vinaya* written in Pāli was translated into Chinese at the end of the 5th century. The translation was never presented to the emperor and was subsequently lost (see Heirman 2004, pp. 377–378; 2007, pp. 190–192).

[6] For details on the translation of these *vinaya* traditions, see Yuyama (1979) and Heirman (2007, pp. 175–181). A Tibetan translation of the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, as well as substantial Sanskrit sections, is extant.

[7] See also Witkowski (2013, pp. 8–12).

[8] Cf. John Kieschnick (2008, p. 224): "material culture … [is] generally defined as artifacts, as well as ideas about and conduct related to artifacts, with 'artifacts' limited to material objects made or altered by human beings".

since every individual is constantly confronted with his or her own, and thus inevitably has to take care of it;[9] and, after dressing, a body is in contact with clothes, which are also in constant need of care. Both the body itself and clothes project a certain image of the person, and the community to which that person belongs, to the wider public. Practices relating to the body and clothing thus help us understand the full implications of monastic life. They allow us to increase our knowledge of what monks and nuns considered to be good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate. Such practices might be viewed as relatively simple and elementary; however, as Norbert Elias suggests, it is their very triviality that gives us a clear insight into the structure and development of the psyche and its relationships as embodiments of social and psychological life (Elias 1978, p. 117). In this sense, outward behaviour becomes the expression of the inner identity of a Buddhist community, in this case in the context of early Indian Buddhism. Practices relating to the body and clothing thus display the development of a clear Buddhist monastic self-image, defined by a common code.

In the present article, we shall focus on clothing; but, of course, the body is never far away. Indeed, the former could even be considered an extension of the latter. This phenomenon is not unique to the Buddhist community. It has, for instance, been beautifully described by Georges Vigarello in his work (1988) on concepts of cleanliness in mediaeval France and beyond. In France, just as in early Indian Buddhist communities, cleanliness was linked primarily to decency, rather than hygiene, and to good manners, rather than health (Vigarello 1988, pp. 41–77). This focus on decency prompted French people in the Middle Ages to emphasise the visible parts of their bodies and clothing. As we will discuss below, a similar – though not fully parallel – phenomenon occurred in the early Buddhist Indian communities: cleanliness was symbolised by both the body and the clothes that covered it.

Within this framework of material culture relating to the care of monastic clothing in the early Indian Buddhist *saṃgha*, the present article comprises two parts. First, we will investigate how monks were instructed to take care of their clothes. What did the process entail and how was it done? Second, we will discuss the various motives that prompted the Buddhist monastic community to promulgate guidelines for the proper treatment of robes, thus shaping its identity. Why did the monks need to take care of their robes? Was this aspect of their lives considered important? What were its implications?

2. How to Take Care of Monastic Robes

The robes worn by its members are among the principal identity markers of the Buddhist monastic community. It is therefore not surprising that *vinaya* sources contain extensive guidelines on how to care for these items of clothing. Cleanliness is a prominent aspect of these instructions. In this first part of our study, we focus on what is needed to clean a robe and how this cleaning should be carried out. First, though, we

[9] For a detailed study on bodily care in a monastic environment, see Heirman – Torck (2012).

look at another important element in the guidelines: preventing a robe from becoming dirty in the first place.

2.1. How to Prevent a Robe from Becoming Dirty

Vinaya texts repeatedly insist that monastic robes should be clean at all times. Naturally, then, they provide guidance on how to stop them becoming dirty. When in residence, a monk usually wears two robes: an 'upper robe' (*uttarāsaṅga*) and an 'inner robe' (*antarvāsaka*). A third 'outer robe' (*saṃghāṭī*) is added when the monk ventures outside.[10] All three robes should be kept clean, with special attention paid to the outer robe, as that is most visible to outsiders. When going to the toilet, for instance, the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 858a14–16; 864b4–18) stipulates that a monk should put his robes on a hanger or place them in a special room, to prevent them getting soiled. Nevertheless, when entering the toilet, he is allowed to wear one robe, which might be either the inner robe or a special toilet robe.[11] The *Sarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1435: 419b13–16) further stipulates that any monk wearing a *saṃghāṭī* should not transport tiles, stones, mud, earth, grass or wood, nor sweep the floor. A *saṃghāṭī* must be shown respect at all time, so a monk should never walk, sit or sleep on it, nor wear it on his otherwise naked body.

Special measures are described for when a monk or a nun has an ulcer and when a nun is menstruating. In order to avoid spoiling the regular robes, a rag should be placed on a bleeding ulcer,[12] and nuns should use a special menstruation cloth.[13] Both of these items are meant to protect the standard robes and ensure that they do not get dirty.

2.2 How to Clean Robes

Of course, despite making every effort to protect a robe, it will still inevitably get dirty, even if it is just through sweating. Consequently, the robe will need to be cleaned

[10] See, among others, Horner (1938–1966, vol. 2, pp. 1–2, note 2): "The *antaravāsaka* is put on at the waist, and hangs down to just above the ankles, being tied with the *kāyabandhana*, a strip of cloth made into a belt or girdle … The *uttarāsaṅga* is the upper robe worn when a monk is in a residence. It covers him from neck to ankle, leaving one shoulder bare … The *saṅghāṭi* is put on over this when the monk goes out. It may be exactly the same size as the *uttarāsaṅga*, but it consists of double cloth, since it is made from two robes woven together."

[11] For details, see Heirman – Torck (2012, pp. 70–71).

[12] Pāli *vinaya*, *Vin* vol. 4, p. 172, *kaṇḍupaṭicchādi*, an 'itch-cloth'; *fu chuang yi* 覆瘡衣, 'a cloth to cover an ulcer' (T.1421: 71a26–27; T.1425: 393b5; T.1428: 694c26–27; T.1435: 129c18–19; T.1442: 896a17).

[13] Pāli *vinaya*, *Vin* vol. 4, p.303, *āvasathacīvara*, 'dwelling cloth'; *yue qi yi* 月期衣, 'monthly cloth' (T.1425: 545c29, 546a2–3); *zhe yue shui yi* 遮月水衣 and *zhe yue qi yi* 遮月期衣, 'a cloth to stop monthly fluid' (T.1421: 84a26; T.1428: 732b2–3); also called *bing yi* 病衣, 'illness cloth' (T.1428: 732b4; T.1435: 336a10; T.1443: 1011c3) or *yue qi yi bu jing* 月期衣不淨, 'a cloth to stop monthly fluid, an impurity cloth' (T.1425: 545c23–24). For details, see Heirman (2002, pp. 515–517, note 197).

regularly, so it is no surprise that there are many references to this throughout the *vinaya* sources. When discussing how to clean robes, the *vinaya*s frequently mention three standard techniques: washing (*huan*浣), beating (*da* 打) and dyeing (*ran* 染).[14] In the following subsections we focus on the *vinaya*s' instructions for carrying out these three actions correctly.

How to Wash and Beat Monastic Robes Correctly

Monks and nuns generally wash at a pool, using a washing basin, probably made out of stone or wood.[15] After washing the robes, they should be dried in the sun, in the open air (T.1421: 108c16–21). It seems that washing should always occur at a designated washing place, either inside or outside the monastery. The *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* (T.1425: 298a18–19) specifies that, after washing clothes in the monastery, they should be hung on a wall to dry.[16] Care should also be taken that the clothes are not blown away (over the wall) at night. The same *vinaya* also specifies that clothes should be twisted and turned in water during washing. When drying them in the sun, dust and insects should be avoided (T.1425: 508a29). The basin used for washing must be cleaned after use, then stored in a designated place (T.1425: 509c1). The *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 936a4) further mentions a few washing products:

[14] See, for instance, Pāli *vinaya*, *Vin* vol. 3, pp. 205–207; *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, T.1421: 26c18; *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425: 291c18–19 (dyeing, beating and cleaning, *zuo jing* 作淨); *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, T.1428: 607b24–25; *Sarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1435: 43b26; *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1442: 722a23). Some passages also add sewing, *feng* 縫, to this standard row (e.g. T.1421: 23b27; T.1425: 291c18–19; T.1428: 609b1; T.1435: 114b29–c3; T.1442: 715c14). This is linked to a discourse on the correct dimensions of the robes, a topic which goes beyond the scope of this article (for some details, see Guo 2001, pp. 90–113).

[15] The *Mahīśāsakavinaya* (T.1421: 108c18) mentions a stone basin, while the *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* (T.1425: 509c1) refers to a wooden basin. The *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 795a25–c1) gives some more details: there may be a big stone on which the clothes are washed and another on which they are dried (similarly in the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1450: 133b4–14). The *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 855a17–19) mentions the use of washing utensils (*huan qi* 浣器) and wooden washing boards (*huan ban* 浣板). The *Sarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1435: 279a18–19) simply refers to the use of washing tubs (*cao yu pen* 槽杅盆). Finally, the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1442: 699c1) specifies that there are stone steps at the washing place, and also mentions the use of a stick during the washing of clothes (*huan yi bang* 浣衣棒, T.1442: 668c2). Some *vinaya* passages also emphasise that the water used for washing should not contain insects, so as to avoid killing them (for discussions on killing small animals living in water, see Schmithausen 1991, pp. 30–35; Maes 2010–2011, pp. 90–102): *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 45a11–12) and *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1443: 982a17).

[16] Also mentioned in the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 979c13–14). The *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* (T.1425: 509c1–2) further refers to the use of a clothes line (*shai yi sheng* 曬衣繩) that has to be neatly stored away after use, to stop it becoming tangled. Some *vinaya* passages also indicate that clothes are at times hung up in a place that is locked (*Dharmaguptakavinaya*, T.1428: 732c12, 772a4; on two occasions this relates to clothes used by women only – a menstruation rag and a *saṃkakṣikā*, a cloth used to support the breasts). On how to lock doors, see von Hinüber (1992, pp. 30–34).

alkaline soil (*lu tu* 鹵土), ashes (*hui* 灰), mud (*tu* 土) and cow dung (*niu shi* 牛屎).[17] This *vinaya* also warns against the use of rough basins and rough washing stones, since they might damage the clothes. Instead, basins and stones used for washing should always be smooth (T.1428: 936a4–6). The *Sarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1435: 278b11–12) goes further and suggests that valuable clothes should never be washed on stone, as this might damage them; a wooden board should be used instead.[18] Conversely, the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1451: 271a17–20) warns that clothes might be damaged by rubbing and washing them on a wooden board. It is therefore better to soak them in a basin of warm water, then gently wash them using only the hands (or feet, if necessary).

Special attention is paid to the washing of certain items, such as the menstruation rag.[19] As the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 732a29–c16) and the *Sarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1435: 336a9–24) indicate, this cloth is shared among the nuns, so it must be washed and (according to the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*) dyed and beaten properly. In order to avoid criticism, the *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* (T.1425: 545c22) specifies that these rags should never be washed in a women's, men's or guest's washing or bathing place, as the water will get dirty and red.[20] Special attention is also paid to the outer robe (*saṃghāṭī*).[21] The *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* (T.1425: 525c24–526a15) explains that the seams of a heavy outer robe can be separated in order to wash the individual panels, but it should be sewn together again within five or six days. Once it has been washed, all of its sections should be spread out on either a rattan blind (a kind of bamboo tray) or a bench, with the four corners held down with rocks so that the wind cannot blow the robe away.[22]

Finally, in addition to washing, the robes may be beaten. The *Sarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1435: 276c10–13) indicates that this should be done specifically to beat out dust. However, care must be taken not to change the dimensions of the robe during beating, so only small, thin canes should be used. The Pāli *vinaya* (*Vin* vol. 3, p. 206) suggests that clothes may be beaten by hand or with a club.[23]

[17] These products are also used to wash the hands after toilet use. Cow dung is probably considered to have some disinfectant properties. For details, see Heirman–Torck (2012, p. 71).

[18] These valuable clothes, mentioned in the *Sarvāstivādavinaya*, are called *huo huan yi* 火浣衣 'fire-washed-cloth', which refers to some kind of precious material. It is unclear, however, what this material might be. The Chinese term seems to have been used for cloth made from some kind of tree bark or from the fur of a special rat (*Ciyuan* 辭源 (Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1986 [1979–1983]), vol. 3, p. 1913, s.v. 火浣衣). Of course, in a Buddhist context, the bark would be more likely.

[19] See note 13. In addition, ulcer rags (see note 12) need to be washed and dyed (T.1428: 862c15–25; T.1451: 270c1–3).

[20] The *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* (T.1425: 393b19–21) also contains some details for a cloth that is used to cover wounds. Special care should be taken when removing it: in a screened-off place, the injured part of the body, with the cloth still on it, should be immersed in water. After soaking the cloth in this way for some time, it may be removed and washed.

[21] See note 10.

[22] For a translation, see Hirakawa (1982, pp. 209–211).

[23] The *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* also specifies that clothes should be beaten with the hand (T.1442: 722b3–4, 953c4–5).

Clearly, then, robes should be treated with care at all times: they should be cleaned in the correct way, and every effort should be taken not to damage them. The washing place and washing utensils are also important, and they must be kept clean and tidy.

How to Dye Monastic Robes Correctly

Many *vinaya* texts contain practical details on how to dye robes. Although an explanation of the full technical process falls beyond the scope of the present article, the *vinaya*s' general instructions for dyeing robes provide some useful insights into what issues are important for Buddhist monastics, enhancing our understanding of how robes should be handled in a monastic environment.

The Pāli *vinaya* (*Vin* vol. 1, pp. 285–287) contains an interesting and rich summary of the various steps involved in dyeing a robe. First, this *vinaya* explains that the dye (*rajana*) should be made from roots (*mūla*), stems (*khandha*), bark (*taca*), leaves (*patta*), flowers (*puppha*) or fruits (*phala*).[24] Neither dung (*chakana*) nor yellow clay (*paṇḍumattikā*) should be used to make dyes, as these produce bad colours (*dubbaṇṇa*). The dye should always be boiled, as cold dye can give the robes an unpleasant odour. This should be done in a pot, taking care that it does not boil over.[25] As an extra precaution against this, one can use a basin, interpreted by Isaline Blew Horner (1938–1966, vol. 4, p. 405) as a basin placed under the pot to catch any spilt dye.[26] To test whether the dye has fully boiled and is ready for use, a drop should be put in water or on the back of a fingernail. The *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 936a12–14) specifies that two or three drops should be added to cold water. If the dye is liquid (*shen* 沈), it is ready for use. The *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 936a13–21) further explains that filtering the dye should be carried out in a basin. The sediment should be kept at the bottom with a broom. If the broom is too flimsy for this task, wood can be used too. One person holds the basin while another filters. If the liquid is too hot to touch, pincers should be used. The temperature of the dye must be carefully monitored at all times, to avoid the dye getting spoiled. When dyeing a cloth, a little of the dye should be transferred from the large basin to a smaller basin. The Pāli *vinaya* specifies that a ladle, a scoop with a handle, a pitcher or a bowl can be used for this task. The clothes are added to the dye in a kind of trough.

Once the dyeing process is complete the robes must be dried, but they should never be placed on the ground, to avoid dust. Placing them on grass matting can create

[24] The *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 936a7–8, 11) also enumerates a few dyeing products, including mud, bark and tree roots. The latter should be chopped into small pieces to ensure a high-quality dye.

[25] The *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* (T.1425: 509b28–29) specifies that vessels used in the dyeing process must be cleaned after use, and stored in designated places. Storage of all objects used for dyeing is also mentioned in the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 936b2–4).

[26] Alternatively, the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 939a12) advises pressing down the dye with wood to stop it boiling over.

problems too, since the robes might be eaten by ants.[27] Therefore, the robes should be hung on bamboo or a cord. However, the robes up must not be hung from the middle, because that will cause the dye to drip down both sides. Instead, they should be hung from the corner with a kind of thread,[28] then turned regularly so that the drips do not go to one side. The robes should not be left unattended until the drips have ceased. Finally, the robe material should be immersed in water if it becomes too stiff (because of too much dye). It can also be beaten with the hands to soften it. The *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya* (T.1435: 276c14–16) includes another word of caution: dye sediment should be wiped from a recently dyed robe with a towel, not swept away with a broom, since the latter would leave stripes on the robe and spoil the colour. Finally, the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 936b5–14) provides some special guidelines on how to clean the dyeing place: the room should be swept with a broom, taking care not to generate too much dust. Old robes should be worn for this task, to avoid getting new ones dusty.

As we can see from the above, the *vinaya*s, especially the Pāli *vinaya* and the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, include several instructions about how to avoid undesirable outcomes in the dyeing process – such as producing malodorous cloth. When drying the robes, care should be taken to stop them becoming dusty or being eaten by ants. Colours should be spread evenly, and the correct amount of dye should be used to stop the cloth becoming stiff. Utensils must be cleaned and stored, and the dyeing room should be tidied up, generating as little dust as possible. All these details indicate that colouring robes should be carried out in the appropriate way, with due attention paid to maintaining the cleanliness of the monastic environment.

Colours

The correct use of colour in the dyeing process is also outlined in the *vinaya*s. Two issues come to the fore here: robes should never be multi-coloured; and only certain colours are appropriate. Multi-coloured robes are probably considered to be too beautiful, as is hinted at in the *Mahīśāsakavinaya* (T.1421: 135a3–4, 137c13), which explains that monks who receive multi-coloured (*za se* 雜色) robes have permission to wash away the colours to make them 'bad' (*huai* 壞) or 'single coloured – bad' (*chun se huai* 純色壞). Monks are still allowed to wear robes that could not be changed from multi-coloured to a single colour, but only inside the monastery.[29] The *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* (T.1425: 455a13–17) relates that the Buddha told monks who received robes with four colours to change them to one colour (*yi zhong se* 一種色).

[27] The *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 936a21–23) makes the same recommendations, but states that placing the robes on the ground or on grass will spoil the colour and damage the grass. This is in line with guidelines on how to avoid damaging grass with remnants of food or excrement (see Schmithausen 1991, pp. 30–35; Maes 2010–2011, pp. 90–102).

[28] This is to prevent damage to the corner. Isaline Blew Horner (1938–1966, vol. 4, p. 407) suggests that the thread mentioned in the Pāli *vinaya* will pass from corner to corner. The *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 936a25–27) also mentions using such a thread to hang up the robes and ensure that the dye is evenly distributed.

[29] Also, robes that are striped or spotted with several colours (*ban se* 斑色) should not be worn.

Moreover, this colour cannot be a 'superior' colour (*shang se* 上色). If it is, it must be made 'bad' (*huai* 壞).[30] This can be achieved by the addition of some dye. Nevertheless, a colour should not look too bad, at least according to *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 936a6), which states that a robe should be re-dyed if its colour has faded (*tuo* 脫, 'take off').

Each *vinaya* provides a list of permissible colours, although it is not always clear which colours are exactly meant. The Pāli *vinaya* (*Vin* vol. 4, pp. 120–121) refers to three colours in *pācittiya* rule 58 for monks:[31] *nīla*, a kind of dark green or dark blue, explained as *nīla* of bronze and *nīla* of foliage; *kaddama*, mud colour; and *kāḷasāma*, black. Parallel rules in the Chinese *vinaya*s equally mention three colours, usually *qing* 青, *hei* 黑 and *mulan* 木蘭, as is the case in the *Mahīśāsakavinaya* (T.1421: 68a6–29, pāc. 77), the *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* (T.1425: 369a6–c17, pāc. 48) and the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 676b20–c24, pāc. 60). These are a kind of dark blue-green, black and magnolia, respectively.[32] The *Sarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1435: 108c28–109b29, pāc. 59) refers to *qing* 青, *ni* 泥 and *qian* 茜 – blue-green, mud colour and (alizarin) red. The *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1442: 842c26–845a23, pāc. 58) similarly cites *qing* 青, *ni* 泥 and *chi* 赤 – blue-green, mud colour and a kind of red.

Interestingly, various *vinaya* passages further indicate that the colours of monastic robes should not be too perfect. On the contrary, some *vinaya*s mention that some kind of tarnishing of the robe should be carried out, even when it has been dyed in a permissible colour. Usually they suggest adding some colour spots, as discussed by Guo Huizhen in a detailed study on monastic clothing (2001, pp. 87–89).[33] In this sense, then, a monastic robe should be dyed properly, but should not be perfect. The *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* (T.1425: 369c9–17) indicates that a spot should be between the size of a green pea and the width of four fingers.[34] Therefore, a spot might be very small. This is clearly hinted at in the Pāli *vinaya* (*Vin* vol. 4, p. 120), where it is said that even (something as small as) a blade of grass might be used (to tarnish a robe). The *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* adds that there should be between one and nine spots (but always

[30] This process of making the robe less beautiful is also mentioned in the Pāli *vinaya* (*Vin* vol. 4, pp. 120–121), where the term *dubbaṇṇakaraṇa* ('to make (*karaṇa*) a bad colour (*dubbaṇṇa*)') is used.

[31] A (Pāli) *pācittiya*, (Sanskrit) *pācittika* (or variants), is an offence that must be expiated (cf. Heirman 2002, pp. 141–147).

[32] *Mulan*, or magnolia, is sometimes defined as mud colour, as in the *Shanjian lü piposha* 善見律毘婆沙, a *vinaya* commentary on the Pāli tradition (T.1462: 785c4). The latter commentary is often seen as a translation of the Pāli *Samantapāsādikā*, a commentary on the Pāli *vinaya* traditionally attributed to the monk Buddhaghosa. (On this attribution and the doubts it raises, see von Hinüber 1996, pp. 103–104.) The translation is attributed to the monk Saṃghabhadra and was completed in 488–489. Its relation to the Pāli text, however, is not straightforward, and it has been the subject of many debates (for details on this text, and a discussion of its relationship to the Pāli *Samantapāsādikā*, see the recent doctoral study by Gudrun Pinte 2011).

[33] The *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* (T.1425: 452a19), for instance, uses the term *dian jing* 點淨, which means 'to purify [i.e. to make acceptable for the *saṃgha*] by adding spots'.

[34] When dimensions are given in the *vinaya*s, they are usually based on *sugata* measurements, interpreted as the measurements of the Buddha. Their exact scale is difficult to calculate, however. For details, see Heirman (2002, pp. 654–656, note 112, and pp. 730–731, note 172).

an uneven number), spread as if spots of mud had fallen on the robe. The *Sarvāstivādavinaya* specifies that the three (permissible) colours should be mixed in order to make the final colour 'bad' (*huai* 壞) (T.1435: 109b11–16). For instance, if a monk receives a blue-green robe, he must add mud or red in order to 'purify' (*jing* 淨) it. In this context, 'purify' means that the robe is made acceptable for the *saṃgha*'.[35] Similarly, if a monk receives a yellow (*huang* 黃), red (*chi* 赤) or white (*bai* 白) robe, he should add one of the three permissible colours: blue-green, mud colour or (alizarin) red. The latter guideline is somewhat unclear, however, since it seems to allow that a robe might be dyed in an impermissible colour, as long as some spots are then added. (Of course, dyeing a robe in an impermissible colour would seem to run counter to several other guidelines.) Still, the *Sarvāstivādavinaya* also clearly disapproves of some colours, such as the five so-called single (*chun* 純) colours (strikingly including *qing* 青, one of the colours listed as permissible in several other passages): *chi* 赤, red; *qing* 青, blue-green; *yujin* 鬱金, turmeric (an aromatic plant whose rhizomes are ground to make a deep orange-yellow powder); *huang lan* 黃藍, yellow-blue; and *mantizha* 曼提咤, ?*mañjiṣṭhā*, Indian madder (which produces a bright red colour) (T.1435: 371a13–15).[36] Then again, in another passage, the *Sarvāstivādavinaya* suggests that the five single colours can be worn as long as spots (*dian* 點)[37] of different colours are added (T.1435: 419b18–20).

The above discussion indicates that there was considerable debate over what exactly was permissible and what was not. Clearly, however, the colour of monastic robes should always be rather 'bad', and certainly never perfect. On the other hand, as pointed out by the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, colours should never be so bad as to be unacceptable to the lay community; and, when they fade, the robes should be re-dyed.

Special Circumstances

As suggested by the above guidelines, monastic people often wash and dye their robes themselves, always taking care not to damage them in the process. In addition, as we will see, close attention should always be paid to maintaining both one's own and the monastic community's reputation. For instance, since washing is a humble business, it is a matter of respect that clothes should not be washed, dried or dyed in the neighbourhood of a *stūpa* (*Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425: 498a15–16 and b15).[38]

[35] The *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* (T.1425: 369b23 ff.) and the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 676c14 ff.) also use the term *jing* 淨 in the context of dyeing robes. For some details on the term (*qing*) *jing* (清)淨, see, for instance, Heirman (2002, p. 420, note 254). See also Faure (1995, p. 355), who discusses the relationship between 'impure' colours and the 'purification' of the robe in a Japanese context.

[36] These single colours are followed by five great (*da* 大) colours, which are equally not allowed (T.1435: 371a15–16).

[37] With a variant reading *tie* 貼, 'part': in this case, an additional piece of cloth of a different colour is attached to the robe.

[38] The *Sarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1435: 423a1, a11–12, a19–20) states that one should not wash, dye or make clothes near to a bathing room, toilets or urinals, presumably to reduce the risk of soiling the clothes, and as a sign of respect.

When washing clothes, monastic people should also ensure that they do not attract any criticism or ridicule from lay people. In this context, the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* warns monks not to wash their clothes at the common washing place because they might find themselves in an awkward position, such as with robes tangled around their heads (T.1451: 271a13–16).

The *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* also says that monks should be cautious about asking lay people to look after their monastic robes. First of all, the monastic robes' dye might cause problems by staining the clothes of lay people who use the same washing place (T.1451: 271a1–10). Moreover, according to one Mūlasarvāstivāda passage, lay people cannot be trusted to wash monastic robes because they sometimes damage them (271a10–12). Here, the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, more than the other *vinaya*s, points to the preciousness and vulnerability of monastic robes, thus enhancing their symbolic value. It is therefore not surprising that this *vinaya* also insists, as discussed above, that robes should be handled carefully: they should not be beaten or washed on a big wooden board; instead, they should be soaked in a basin of warm water and kneaded softly with the hands or feet. If a monk needs help washing his robes, he should watch his assistant closely, to ensure they do not damage the precious garments (T.1451: 271a17–21).

These *vinaya* guidelines also indicate that some lay people made a business out of the washing of clothes (and bedding). However, at least according to the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, they clearly did not have a very good reputation (T.1451: 338b8–11). In the same vein, this *vinaya* (T.1443: 1011a10–20, pāc. 140)[39] stresses that nuns should not let lay professionals wash their robes. Two reasons are given for this instruction: first, the dye from the nuns' robes might damage other people's clothes; and, second, the lay washers might notice some embarrassing marks, such as a stain created when a nun dreamed of having sex with a man.[40] Hence, two common themes of the *vinaya* texts are prominent here: monks and nuns should always endeavour never to cause harm to lay people; and women, in this case nuns, are often associated with sexual behaviour.[41]

Finally, many *vinaya* texts clearly state that nuns should never assist monks in taking care of their robes. Monks who have their robes washed by a nun commit a *niḥsargika-pācittika*.[42] There are multiple reasons for this: the *Mahīśāsakavinaya* states

[39] Other *vinaya*s do not include this rule.

[40] The same *vinaya* (T.1443: 1019b21–22) also relates the story that nuns soiled washing water with urine and faeces because lay people refused to wash their clothes. Thereupon, soiling water is forbidden by the Buddha (on polluting water, see also Heirman–Torck 2012, p. 68). Besides presenting the nuns in question in a particularly bad light, this story highlights that disrespecting lay people is condemned.

[41] For a recent discussion on this topic, see Collett (2014).

[42] A (Pāli) *nissaggiya pacittiya*, (Sanskrit) *niḥsargika-pācittika* (or variants), is an offence that must be expiated. In addition, an unlawfully obtained or possessed object must be relinquished (cf. Heirman 2012, pp. 138–141). The above rule is found in the Pāli *vinaya*, *Vin* vol. 3, pp. 205–207 (niḥ-pāc. 4); *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, T.1421: 26c14–27a25 (niḥ-pāc. 5); *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425: 300b22–301c2 (niḥ-pāc. 5); *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, T.1428: 607a26–608a12 (niḥ-

that when nuns wash and dye the monks' robes they appear no different from the common women at home (*Mahīśāsakavinaya*, T.1421: 26c18–21), so they will attract criticism from the lay community. The *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* warns that cleaning the monks' robes prevents nuns from taking care of their own business (*Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425: 300c2). Other *vinaya* passages link the cleaning of robes to inappropriate contact between monks and nuns. When a monk visits a woman he should always be aware of the risk of potential sexual attraction, especially when he has contact with his former wife.[43] The danger is so great that a monk might even ejaculate and soil his robes (Pāli *vinaya*, *Vin* vol. 3, pp. 205–207; *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, T.1421: 26c14–17; *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, T.1428: 607b3; *Sarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1435: 43b8; *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1442: 721c19–20). Therefore, as these *vinaya* passages state, a nun should not offer to wash, dye or beat a monk's robe. However, all of them make an exception for a nun who is related by blood to a monk. This proves that some family relations continued during monastic life and were viewed as acceptable by the *vinaya*s' compilers/authors.[44] In general, then, the advice is to do one's own washing unless a related monastic offers a helping hand. Some *vinaya*s make one further, notable exception, however: a teacher should be helped at any time he or she is in need of it.[45]

3. Why Take Care of Monastic Robes?

In the above section, we discussed *how* clothes were washed and dyed. Now we turn to the question of *why* the monks and nuns of early Buddhist India were expected to clean their robes.

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pāc. 5); *Sarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1435: 43a26–44a28 (niḥ-pāc. 5); and *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1442: 716a22–722b12 (niḥ-pāc. 4) (similar information can be found in T.1443: 947c8–953c11). The *Sarvāstivādavinaya* equally states that a monk should not make, wash or dye the robe of a nun who is not related to him (T.1435: 84c18–23).

[43] On relations between husbands and wives, and on the potential problems that could arise, see, in particular, Clarke (2014, pp. 96–99).

[44] On allowing nuns who are relatives to wash clothes, see Clarke (2014, pp. 102–106). It is important to note that a former wife is not considered to be 'a related nun'; see Clarke (2014, p. 104).

[45] Pāli *vinaya*, *Vin* vol. 1, pp. 49–50, *Vin* vol. 2, pp. 226–227 and *Sarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1435: 301c4–5: one must help a teacher wash and dye his clothes. T.1435: 328a10–22 (pāc. 113): a nun should assist her teacher for two years after having received full ordination, including washing and dyeing her clothes. (The Pāli *vinaya*, the *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* and the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* also include a rule which states that a young nun should stay with her teacher for two years, without specifying, however, that she should wash and dye the teacher's clothes.) In a similar vein, sick people should also be given a helping hand. (*Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425: 455a25–b16: the Buddha and Ānanda help a monk who is sick to wash his clothes and bedding. *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, T.1428: 862b21–863b2: the Buddha prescribes how sick monks need to be helped, including washing their clothes. *Sarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1435: 205a26–b15: the Buddha assists a sick monk and washes his clothes.)

3.1. Filth: a Reason to Wash

All of the *vinaya*s leave little doubt that the cleanliness of robes is important; and, as we have seen, they contain detailed guidelines on how to wash them. They are less clear about when and why this washing should be carried out, although many short references still provide relevant information. The basic reasons given for why robes should be washed are: to make them suitable for use and to remove dirt.[46] Some *vinaya* passages state that whenever a monk receives a robe, whether brand new or old and dirty, he should wash it to make it suitable for use. For instance, the *Mahīśāsakavinaya* states that, if a monk receives a new robe (*xin yi* 新衣), he must wash it, bring it up to the acceptable standard, and dye it (T.1421: 180c11–12). Of course, 'a new robe' does not necessarily refer to a robe that has never been used. It may equally mean robe material that has been used previously in the lay community and has been given to the *saṃgha*. These two possibilities are clearly acknowledged in the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1442: 845a16–18), which says: "A 'new robe' (*xin yi* 新衣) refers to two kinds of 'new': new robe material, or material newly received from someone else. When [using the term] 'new robe', these [two] meanings are referred to."[47] This passage occurs in the explanation following a *pācittika* rule that urges monks to dye their new robes in the correct colours. It clearly indicates that both types of 'new robe' material should be dyed. It is plausible that the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* is also referring to both types when it urges monks and nuns to wash, dye and sew new robe material (T.1442: 715c14; T.1443: 947a29). Moreover, the same processes should be applied when dealing with old robe material (T.1442: 715c26; T.1443: 947b12–13), although in this case there might be an additional reason to wash the cloth, since it could be dirty, dusty or smelly. Therefore, in its advice on washing, dyeing and sewing, the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* does not make any distinction between robe material that is old, new or newly received. In the same vein, the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* mentions that if a monk receives a robe that has not yet been washed, he should wash it immediately. There is no indication that this is necessary to remove dirt. The passage in question mentions a large amount of robe material offered by a rich donor, so the assumption might be that it is already clean. Nevertheless, it should be cut *and washed* (T.1428: 855a15–19).

The above passages suggest that robes are washed, dyed and sewn, in a semi-ceremonial way, to allow them to enter a standard monastic setting: there must be no doubt that the monks' robes are clean and of approved dimensions. It is irrelevant whether the new robe is clean or dirty when the monk receives it; either way, it must be made suitable and ready for use by the monastic community. This ceremonial need is most clearly expressed in the so-called *kaṭhina* ceremony, held just after the rainy

[46] The *vinaya* compilers/authors do not cite hygiene, a concept linked to the avoidance of illness, as a reason to wash robes. Still, as discussed by Witkowski (2013, pp. 19, 27), avoidance of illness is used as an argument for clean robes in the context of the Buddha allowing monastics to wear donated robe material rather than cloth collected from a (filthy) refuse heap.

[47] The *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 676c10) has a similar explanation, saying that a 'new robe' means any robe received from someone else. For a discussion, see Guo (2001, pp. 77–78).

season, which is the starting point for a period when the monastic community is permitted to accept new robe material from donors. A piece of cloth large enough to make a robe – or even a set of robes – is used during the ceremony. This '*kaṭhina* cloth' represents all of the robe material offered to the *saṃgha*. As Kun Chang (1957, pp. 38–42) explains, the robe should be properly washed, dyed and sewn. This is neatly expressed in the *Sarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1435: 207b8–13): "What are the rules for accepting the *kaṭhina* cloth? The Buddha says: 'The one who, for the *saṃgha*, accepts the *kaṭhina* cloth needs to one-mindedly wash, dye, cut, align the patches (*cen* 篸), sew (*ci* 刺), and precisely measure (*anyin liangdu* 安隱量度).[48] While he is washing the *kaṭhina* cloth, he should think: 'I make this cloth into a *kaṭhina* cloth and accept it.' While he is washing, dyeing, cutting, aligning the patches, sewing and precisely measuring, he should each time think: 'I make this cloth into a *kaṭhina* cloth and accept it.'"

In addition to observing the guidelines regarding the treatment of received robes, whether new or old, monastic members obviously need to look after their own robes, which will inevitably get dirty through use. Again, filth should be avoided, as dirty robes are improper for a member of the monastic community. As clearly stated in the *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, a monk should wash his robe when it is filthy (T.1421: 27a8–9). This *vinaya* also insists on the washing of clothes and bedding after eating garlic, to eliminate the smell (T.1421: 176a17–26). In fact, monks should try to avoid eating garlic altogether; but if they lapse, they should not enter communal rooms for seven days. Thereafter, they should shake their bedding, wash it and dry it in the sun, adding some perfume. They should also wash their clothes and themselves. Clearly, even the faintest hint of garlic should have disappeared by then.[49] Somewhat paradoxically, the same *vinaya* instructs monks not to wash their robes when they are just a little dirty, in order to prevent them decaying too quickly (T.1421: 137b23–24). So, on the one hand, we see a clear wish to keep the robes clean, as a sign of proper behaviour, while on the other monks are urged not to waste the community's property by cleaning their robes too frequently and wearing them out. Other *vinaya*s also

[48] *Cen* 篸 is a relatively rare character with several meanings, mainly: 'in an uneven shape', 'a needle' and 'to sew' (*Hanyu Da Zidian* 漢語大字典 (Wuhan: Hubei Cishu Chubanshe; Sichuan Cishu Chubanshe, 1995), p. 1256, s.v. 篸). *Ci* 刺 is a much more common character meaning 'to pierce' (with, for instance, a needle). The meaning of *anyin liangdu* 安隱量度 remains somewhat obscure. *Anyin* 安隱 can mean 'to secure', while *liangdu* 量度 means 'a measure' or 'to measure'. Given that the series mentioned in the *Sarvāstivādavinaya* seems to be a sequence of actions that should be undertaken when accepting and preparing a *kaṭhina* robe, the hypothetical interpretation of the above passage is: robe material should first be washed, dyed and cut. Then the robe pieces should be ordered in a standard sequence of strips, with long and short patches, as prescribed in the *vinaya* texts (for details, see, for instance, Chang (1957, pp. 49–50); Kieschnick (1999, pp. 13–14; 2003, pp. 90–92); Guo (2001, pp. 90–113)). Next, the patches should be sewn together using a needle. Finally, dimensions need to be controlled and secured. Many thanks to Fa Ling, Ghent University, and John Kieschnick, Stanford University, for sharing their views on this passage.

[49] On the consumption of garlic in a monastic environment, see, among others, Kieschnick (2005, pp. 191–192), and Heirman – De Rauw (2006, pp. 61–62, 64).

mention that robes should be washed when they get dirty.[50] The *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, for instance, clearly prescribes that dirty clothes must be washed (T.1425: 3001b9–12), and, to clarify, states: "'Washing' means 'to remove dirt'" (300c27). Finally, the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1447: 1052a21–22) adds that after the rainy season, when monks venture out again on their begging rounds, they should wash their robes. This again shows the importance that is attached to presenting the right image to a lay, donor, public.

Removal of dirt as a basic reason for washing one's robes may seem obvious. However, in a monastic context, where the focus is on following an ascetic lifestyle, this might be less logical than it sounds. Indeed, as Nicholas Witkowski (2013) has pointed out, at least some members of the Buddhist *saṃgha* chose to wear clothes that could be defined as symbols of a much more 'ascetic' lifestyle than the one recommended by the *vinaya* guidelines discussed above. Their behaviour is linked to a list of ascetic practices, the *dhūtaguṇa*s, which were allowed, though not imposed, in the Buddhist community.[51] One of these ascetic practices involves the wearing of refuse rags (*pāṃśukūlika cīvara*, usually translated in Chinese as *fen sao yi* 糞掃衣, 'clothes [found on a heap of] excrement and refuse'). As Witkowski (2013, pp. 4–5) shows, the term *pāṃśukūla*, from which *pāṃśukūlika* derives, "can refer to the 'refuse heap' in which the material is found or to the clothing which is as filthy as the refuse heap from which it came". The strictest interpretation is 'fabric obtained in a cemetery'.[52] By wearing such clothes, a monk or a nun displays their detachment from property and beauty. Yet, even though some monastics chose this kind of ascetic lifestyle, many did not, so they needed to conform to the standard decorum of the *saṃgha*. Consequently, as Steven Collins (1997, p. 198) aptly points out, they needed to be spotlessly clean: while the inner meditative reflection of a monk or a nun emphasises the impurity

[50] The same goes for bedding: it must be washed when dirty (*Sarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1435: 419a22, 421b23–24). In a similar vein, the *Sarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1435: 130a2–b27 and 197a6–b22) says that every effort should be made to avoid soiling one's bedding by putting an undersheet (*niṣīdana*) on it. (Presumably this would be easier to wash.) The main reason given for this guideline is that donors might be irritated if they see lots of bedding being used. The *vinaya* makes the point that donors give a lot to the *saṃgha*, so their gifts should be kept in the best possible condition. In the same context, the *vinaya* warns against displaying washed bedding overtly by drying it in the sun. It could be stained with semen, which would attract the criticism of lay people. (This is yet another example of the *vinaya*s' recurring fear that sexual behaviour always has the potential to attract lay criticism.) It is also worth noting that the Buddha is acting proactively when issuing the above guidelines; he is not responding to any criticism from lay donors. He sees the bedding drying in the sun and takes action to stop the practice, which reveals just how sensitive this issue is. For more details on guidelines concerning sleep and sleeping material, see Heirman (2012).

[51] For details, see, among others, Dantinne (1991).

[52] For a discussion on cemetery robes, see also Schopen (1997), who focuses on how the *vinaya* compilers/authors (especially of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda* tradition) tried to marginalise such *pāṃśukūlika* practices. In the same vein, in order to avoid a connection to the dead and thus to impurity, in some *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* definitions of *pāṃśukūlika*, cemeterial cloth is explicitly excluded (1997, pp. 83–84). As shown by Witkowski (2013, p. 39), this is different from the Dharmaguptaka and Sarvāstivāda traditions.

and impermanence of the body, his or her social position requires what Collins calls 'a spotless performance'.[53]

We now focus on this goal of socially immaculate behaviour, albeit while remembering that a more austere and solitary option was equally available and recognised. In this sense, rags collected at cemeteries are particularly interesting. For monastics who chose a *dhūtaguṇa* lifestyle, these rags might have been acceptable, or at least could be made acceptable; for those who aimed for 'a spotless performance', the situation was very different. As the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1451; 282c18–27) points out, when taking cloth from a corpse, there might be as many as five problems with respect to the quality of the fabric: it has several colours; it stinks; it is full of lice; it has no inherent strength; and it is possessed by a *yakṣa* (magical demon, often associated with sickness).[54] First, such clothes should be separated from other items and exposed to the wind and the sun for seven to eight days. Then they should be washed and dyed. This process might make them more acceptable; although, as Schopen (1997, pp. 91–93) points out, the connection with 'death' and thus with 'impurity' will continue to linger, to such an extent that any monk who wears such clothes might be viewed as an 'outsider'.

These instructions relating to clothes taken from cemeteries highlight some of the major issues pertaining to monastic robes in general: the robes should be clean, without any dirt or stench; they should not harbour pests; they should not fall apart; and they should be dyed in an acceptable colour. The possibility of possession by a *yakṣa* further underlines the danger of venturing close to the dead, and to impurity. It therefore comes as no surprise that other *vinaya*s insist on washing refuse rags, too. The *Mahīśāsakavinaya* (T.1421: 135a13–16), for instance, states that refuse rags (collected in the streets) are not clean (*bu jing* 不淨) and can fill a room with bad smells.[55] Another reason why they should be washed immediately is to eliminate breeding insects. Monks should be careful not to wash them in a clean pool or in the upper reaches of a river, and they not use clean utensils. These guidelines clearly link the notion of 'impurity' to refuse rags, since they acknowledge that such clothes can easily spoil clean water and taint clean objects. The *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428: 711c1–20; 957a12–17) states that monks must wash, dye and add perfume to refuse rags (that have been in contact with a dead person or a deathbed) before wearing them in the vicinity of a *stūpa*. In this context, as we pointed out earlier, respect for the *stūpa*, and thus for the Buddha and the community, is paramount.

[53] For a detailed discussion on the interrelation between worthless and worthy bodies, see Ohnuma (2007, pp. 199–241).

[54] Schopen (1997, pp. 87–90) discusses the parallel Tibetan text and offers a full translation of the narrative context (for references, see also Schopen 1997, p. 102).

[55] With respect to bad smells, the term *bu jing* 不淨 seems to refer primarily to a lack of cleanliness. However, the same term can also be interpreted as 'not allowable'.

3.2. More Than Just a Robe

The importance of a clean robe, as a socially accepted identifier of the Buddhist community, is clearly underscored in all of the *vinaya* texts. Respect and self-respect, decency and decorum thus go hand in hand. A clean robe testifies to the clean image of the *saṃgha* and its individual members, all of whom are therefore of respect and gifts and are able to return benefits to society. A robe is thus much more than a simple item of clothing: it is a symbol of the proper behaviour that is expected of the Buddhist monastic community. Yet a robe does not stand alone, because it covers a body and may even be considered an extension of it. As such, personal and communal cleanliness is signified by both the body and the clothes that cover it; and, of course, the former is less visible to the outside world than the latter. In medieval France, as Georges Vigarello (1988, p. 54) explains, this resulted in "the existence of the body [being] delegated to the objects which covered and encased it. The concept of cleanliness was completely diverted to them". The *vinaya* texts do not go that far: body and robe receive more balanced attention; both need to be clean and decent, as if they are interchangeable.

This close relationship between the body and the monastic robe is clearly acknowledged in several *vinaya*s: the *Mahīśāsakavinaya* (T.1421: 180c14–15), for instance, urges monks to protect their robes as they would their own fragile skin. The *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* (T.1425: 509c20–21) is even more explicit, stating: "If [the robes] are filthy, one has to wash, dye and stitch them repeatedly. One should see one's robes as one's own skin. The rules on robes are as such." It is therefore not surprising that the same *vinaya* also says that a monk should clean, dye and stitch his robes – in much the same way as he should wash his body, feet and face – to ensure they are in a good condition for honouring a *stūpa* and taking meals with his fellow monks (T.1425: 510b12–14). Meanwhile, the *Sarvāstivādavinaya* compares robes to the skin, and the begging bowl to the eyes, and suggests they should be treated with similar care (T.1435: 419b6, 12–13). Most explicit is the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, which states that monks should look after their robes just as they look after their skin, implying that the robes should be properly washed, dyed and stitched (T.1442: 654b26–27). The same *vinaya* tradition later adds a strikingly new element by linking washing and dyeing to the purification of the mind and the understanding of the four noble truths. The *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1450: 129a8–11) expresses this in the following way: "Thereupon the Buddha spoke about the way to leave the world, that is, about the noble truths of suffering, of the origin of suffering, of the cessation of suffering and of the path [leading to the cessation of suffering]. It is like washing the robes: one first removes all filth. When [the robes] are clean and pure (*qing jing* 清淨), colour can easily penetrate. [The monk] Yaśa is also like this. He first heard the Buddha speak about the cleanliness and purity of the mind [lit. of the mind instrument/organ, *xin qi* 心器]. Thereupon, he could understand the four noble truths."[56]

Making a close connection between the outward nature of the body and the purity of the mind is not unusual in Buddhism. Suzanne Mrozik (2007, pp. 61–81)

[56] The same is true for other elders (T.1450: 130c8–11).

explains that the body can easily function as a marker of ethical development;[57] and the robe becomes part of this process when it is put on a par with the body. Mrozik (2007, p. 62) describes this discourse as 'physiomoral'. While many *vinaya* passages treat the robe as a most visible extension of the body, symbolising respect, decency and decorum, in the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* it equally becomes a metaphor for gradual progress towards the Buddhist *dharma*: first one washes away one's hindrances; then, free from dirt, one is able to absorb the four noble truths, in much the same way as clean robe material is fit to absorb dye. Such a parallel approach elevates the acts of washing and dyeing to a higher symbolic level, and turns the robe into an even more important identifying marker for the Buddhist monastic community. It becomes a vital component in the *saṃgha*'s efforts to convince lay people of its worthiness and claim a secure position in wider society.

4. Conclusion

The monastic robe is a prime marker of Buddhist monastic identity, so it is not surprising that normative texts, such as *vinaya*s, contain a wealth of guidelines relating to its use and care. A first striking feature of any monastic robe is its shape: panels are stitched together to form rectangular pieces of cloth that are worn in a specified manner. This particular shape immediately exteriorises the dilemma that the community faces, or, to put it more positively, the balance it wishes to maintain: while monks and nuns should be very modest and should live from whatever they find on the road, they can also receive gifts from lay donors, for whom karmic return is an important aspect of their lives. In this context, the patchwork nature of the robes is deliberately reminiscent of rags found on a dust heap, symbolising detachment from wealth. Actual refuse rags, however, came to be considered as symbolic of extreme austerity; as such, they were certainly not favoured by the general monastic community. On the contrary, various *vinaya* passages criticise the wearing of such rags on the grounds that this shows a lack of respect for the *saṃgha*. Well-kept robes, on the other hand, are praised as signifying respect for both the *saṃgha* and lay donors, who will see that their gifts have been cared for properly.

Just like the shape, the colour of the robes has an important symbolic function. We see the same dilemma (or balance) here, too. On the one hand, the colour should not be bright; instead, it should be 'bad'. On the other, monks and nuns must dye their robes in accordance with strict guidelines, with no signs of drips or stripes. However, they are then instructed to add spots so that the finished garment does not appear too perfect, although the guidelines vary widely in the extent to which, and how, this should be done. In fact, the spots might be so small and faint as to be almost invisible. It again shows the careful and at times difficult balance one seeks to obtain between the humble origin of the robe, symbolised by the spots, and the need for an exemplary spotless appearance.

[57] See also John Powers (2009), who in a study of *jātaka* (birth) stories outlines a strong correlation between virtue and physical beauty.

Washing the robes, the principal focus of the present article, is indeed essential to achieve a decent appearance. Here a distinction must be made between new robes given to the community and robes that are worn on a daily basis. As we have seen, any robes received as gifts must be carefully washed and dyed before they are allowed to 'symbolically' enter the community. This is particularly the case for the *kaṭhina* robe, which represents all donated robes at the ceremonial opening of the gift season after the summer retreat. As for robes used by the monastic community in everyday life, the *vinaya*s contain a wealth of guidelines relating to how they should be kept clean. The members of the *saṃgha* are urged to keep their robes away from filth and to wash them as soon as they become too dirty. On the other hand, the *Mahīśāsakavinaya* also states that robes should not be worn out by washing them too often, as this is wasteful. Once again, as with other guidelines relating to the monastic robe, the main focus is on respect and decency. However, the washing guidelines also go further, washing robes being equated with washing the body.

The monastic body, including its robe, serves as an identifying marker and a calling card of the Buddhist community, so it is not surprising that Buddhist monastics attempt to exercise strict control over it. Washing away dirt and sweat symbolises cleanliness, decency and decorum. Consequently, normative texts such as the *vinaya*s pay particularly close attention to the subject of external appearance, as this helps to define the ideal self-image and identity of the Buddhist monastic community. A clean community is a trustworthy community, worthy of receiving gifts and able to return karmic benefit to the lay society. Moreover, external markers of cleanliness, such as the body itself and robes, may gradually develop into symbols of internal purity. This notion is strikingly proposed in the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, in which washing the robe is compared to removing all hindrances that block the road to the four noble truths. Such a metaphor highlights the importance of a spotless performance, an ideal standard, and it surely increased the monastic community's determination to enforce the guidelines that the compilers/authors of the disciplinary texts sought to instil in every member of the *saṃgha*.

Abbreviations

Niḥ-pāc.	(Pāli) *nissaggiya pacittiya*, (Sanskrit) *niḥsargika-pācittika* (or variants)
Pāc.	(Pāli) *pācittiya*, (Sanskrit) *pācittika* (or variants)
T	*Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大蔵經. 85 vols, ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭. Tokyo, Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1934.
Vin	*Vinaya Piṭakaṃ: One of the Principal Buddhist Holy Scriptures in the Pāli Language*. 5 vols, ed. Herman Oldenberg. 1879–1883. Reprint, London, Pali Text Society, 1969–1993.

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