

# WITHDRAWAL FROM THE MONASTIC COMMUNITY AND RE-ORDINATION OF FORMER MONASTICS IN THE DHARMAGUPTAKA TRADITION

ANN HEIRMAN

*Centre for Buddhist Studies, Faculty of Arts and Philosophy  
Ghent University, [ann.heirman@ugent.be](mailto:ann.heirman@ugent.be)*

**Abstract:** At the apex of Buddhist monasticism are its fully ordained members—Buddhist monks (*bhikṣu*) and nuns (*bhikṣuṇī*). The texts on monastic discipline (*vinayas*) indicate that some monks and nuns, at certain points in their lives, may choose to withdraw from the *saṃgha* (monastic community). The *vinaya* texts from every tradition attempt to regulate such decisions, as well as the re-ordination of former monastics. In this paper, I focus on the Dharmaguptaka tradition, the *vinaya* of which has become standard in China and neighboring regions. My intention is to answer intriguing questions raised by Petra Kieffer-Pülz in her study on the re-ordination of nuns in the Theravāda tradition, which appeared in the first volume of this journal (2015–2016): which options are available to monks and nuns who wish to withdraw from the monastic community; and is it possible for them to gain readmission to the *saṃgha*? I also address a third question: what does this imply for the Dharmaguptaka tradition? My research focuses on the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, and on the commentaries of the most prominent Chinese *vinaya* master, Daoxuan (596–667 CE), whose work lies at the heart of standard—and contemporary—understanding of *vinayas* in China.

**Keywords:** formal and informal withdrawal; re-ordination; Buddhist monks; Buddhist nuns; Dharmaguptaka

## 1. Introduction

The so-called *pārājika* rules comprise the first category of regulations in the *prātimokṣa*—a list of rules for monks (*bhikṣu*) and nuns (*bhikṣuṇī*). Offending against any of these rules results in permanent expulsion from full monastic status.<sup>1</sup> There are four *pārājika* rules for monks, concerning sexual intercourse, killing, stealing, and lying about spiritual achievements. Nuns must abide by these plus an additional four rules: two on improper behavior with a man; one on concealing another nun's offenses; and one on helping a suspended monk.

The rules of six ordination lineages—or schools—are more or less complete. Of other schools, there are numerous fragments, both in Indic languages as well as in Chinese. Rules are explained in so-called *vinayas* (monastic disciplinary texts). Of the six fully surviving *vinayas*, five have survived in Chinese translation. The Pāli *vinaya*—extant only in the Pāli language—is the exception. The other five, in chronological order of translation into Chinese, are: the *Shisong lü* 十誦律 (T.1435; Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*); the *Sifen lü* 四分律 (T.1428; Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*); the *Mohesengqi lü* 摩訶僧祇律 (T.1425; Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya*); the *Mishasai bu hexi wufen lü* 彌沙塞部和醯五分律 (T.1421; Mahīśāsaka *vinaya*); and the *Genbenshuoyiqieyou bu pinaiye* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶 (TT.1442–1451; Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya*). Major sections of the last of these *vinayas* are extant in Sanskrit; the Chinese translation is extensive,

---

<sup>1</sup> On the possibility of retaining a certain, albeit minor, position within the *saṃgha* (monastic community), at least in the non Pāli traditions, see Shayne Clarke, “The Existence of the Supposedly Non-existent *Śikṣādattā-śrāmaṇerī*: A New Perspective on *Pārājika* Penance,” *Buddhist Studies* [Bukkyō kenkyū 佛教研究] 29 (2000); Shayne Clarke, “Monks Who Have Sex: *Pārājika* Penance in Indian Buddhist Monasticism,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 37, no. 1 (2009); Eric Greene, “Atonement of *Pārājika* Transgressions in Fifth-Century Chinese Buddhism,” in *Rules of Engagement: Medieval Traditions of Buddhist Monastic Regulation*, ed. Susan Andrews, Jinhua Chen, and Cuilan Liu. Hamburg Buddhist Studies, 7 (Bochum: Projekt Verlag, 2017): 369–408. For a recent critical reply to Shayne Clarke's hypothesis, see Bhikkhu Anālayo's “*Pārājika*,” *Vinaya Studies* (Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts Research Series, 7), ed. Bhikkhu Anālayo (Taipei: Dharma Drum Publishing Co., 2017), 7–33.

but incomplete, while a Tibetan translation is thought to be complete.<sup>2</sup> The Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*, Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya* and Mahīśāsaka *vinaya* were all translated in the fifth century CE, while the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya* was translated in the eighth century. Although all of these *vinayas* address similar issues, they also contain variations, some of which are considerable, especially when detailed explanations are provided. The same could be said of the *pārājika* rules, which are comparable in every tradition.

In this paper, I focus on a particular aspect of the first *pārājika* rule: all of the *vinayas* allow a monk to return home. The former monk, now a layman, can as such engage in sexual intercourse as long as he has previously withdrawn from his monastic community. Since he is no longer considered a monk, he cannot commit a *pārājika* offense. This leads to a series of questions:

- What does ‘withdrawing from the monastic community’ entail?
- How formal is the renouncement process? Is there a formal statement?
- Is withdrawing a valid course of action only with respect to the first *pārājika*, or may a monk withdraw in other circumstances?
- Is there any such thing as ‘informal renouncement’?
- Can a monk re-enter the monastic community at a later date?
- Is there any difference between those who leave formally and those who leave informally?
- And, most importantly for the present study, is there a gender difference? Can nuns also withdraw from the monastic community, and as lay persons then engage in sexual activity?

All of these questions deal with membership of the monastic community, which can become a source of heated debate whenever the focus is on formal monastic identity. There was certainly such a focus on membership of the *saṃgha* at the beginning of the Chinese Tang dynasty (618–907 CE), when successive emperors attempted to restrict the Buddhist community, while leading Buddhist masters strove to defend their religion in the belief that it was under threat. *Vinaya* texts became powerful tools in this battle:

---

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Shayne Clarke, “Vinayas,” in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, Vol. 1, *Literatures and Languages*, ed. Jonathan A. Silk (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015), 73.

they determine who belongs to the community and who not, and with their many rules, they provide potential guidelines to restrain the Buddhist community.<sup>3</sup> In this context, there were several attempts to unify the various Chinese *vinaya* traditions, with the result that the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* had become the country's standard *vinaya* by the beginning of the eighth century. Both the imperial government<sup>4</sup> and the famous *vinaya* master Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667 CE) supported this unification process.<sup>5</sup> Daoxuan's commentaries were thus based on the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, which he compared carefully with every other *vinaya* text that was available to him (mainly belonging to the Sarvāstivāda, Mahāsāṃghika and Mahīśāsaka traditions).<sup>6</sup> His opinions carried great weight at the time, and he remains the principal authority on *vinaya* texts in China to this day.

Notwithstanding the comparative method that was used in China, it is important to point out that each *vinaya* tradition has its own unique framework of disciplinary rules and procedural actions. In the Indian context, each of these frameworks functioned discretely, so one tradition should never be confused with the others. Petra Kieffer-Pülz articulates this clearly in her recent article on the re-ordination of former Buddhist nuns in the Theravāda tradition.<sup>7</sup> She discusses in detail the guidelines of the Pāli *vinaya* and its commentaries on Buddhist nuns' withdrawal from and subsequent re-entry into the monastic community. Her article also hints at some intriguing differences between the Theravāda and other

<sup>3</sup> For a striking account of this battle in the early Tang dynasty, see Fa Ling Shi and Ann Heirman, "Fighting Fu Yi: Daoxuan and His Defence of Buddhism in the Social and Political Context of the Early Tang Period," forthcoming.

<sup>4</sup> See Tōru Funayama, "The Acceptance of Buddhist Precepts by the Chinese in the Fifth Century," *Journal of Asian History* 38, no. 2 (2004): 113–115; Ann Heirman, "Vinaya from India to China," in *The Spread of Buddhism*, ed. Ann Heirman and Stephan-Peter Bumbacher (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 192–195.

<sup>5</sup> See Tang Yongtong, *Han Wei Liang–Jin Nanbeichao Fojaoshi* 漢魏兩晉南北朝佛教史 (History of Buddhism of the Period of Han, Wei, Two Jin and the Southern and Northern Dynasties) (Banqiao: Luotuo Chubanshe, 1996 [1938]), Vol. 2, 828–29; Ann Heirman, "Can We Trace the Early Dharmaguptakas?" *T'oung Pao* 88 (2002): 419–23.

<sup>6</sup> Daoxuan had access to one of the most extensive monastic libraries of China, and thus could rely on an overwhelming wealth of Buddhist texts; for an overview of all *vinaya* texts translated by Daoxuan's time, see Clarke, "Vinayas."

<sup>7</sup> Petra Kieffer-Pülz, "Re-ordination of Former Buddhist Nuns in the Theravāda Tradition," *Buddhism, Law and Society* 1 (2015–2016): 1–32.

traditions. This paper explores these differences and attempts to answer a number of questions posed by Kieffer-Pülz, with a focus on the Dharmaguptaka tradition and its introduction to China. Discussion of the contrasting opinions of the various *vinaya* texts was—and is—much more common in the Chinese context than it was in the Theravāda context. Daoxuan himself explains why this was the case: “I take the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* as the fundamental *vinaya* text, but if, when writing my commentary, I need to consult other traditions, I cannot but do so” (T.1804, p.2b19–20). Clearly, then, the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* was Daoxuan’s standard text, but he was happy to consult other *vinayas* if necessary. Moreover, Chinese monastics continue to practice this approach today.

In the first part of this paper I outline all of the main *vinaya* traditions’ guidelines on the issues of withdrawing from and rejoining the monastic community, with a detailed focus on the Dharmaguptaka tradition. In the second part I examine Daoxuan’s viewpoint on this crucial aspect of monasticism—an opinion that remains influential to the present day.

## 2. The *Vinaya*

### 2.1. Formal withdrawal from the monastic community

#### 2.1.1. The formal withdrawal of monks

The first *pārājika* rule focuses on sexual intercourse—a transgression that results in the permanent loss of a monk’s status as a fully ordained member (*bhikṣu*) of the monastic community. The Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* rule (T.1428, p.571a21–24) asserts:

If a *bhikṣu* has the same training as other *bhikṣus*, and if he does not renounce the training (*huan jie* 還戒) and does not express his weakness with regard to the training (*jie lei bu zi hui* 戒羸不自悔), and then has impure conduct and indulges in sexual intercourse, even if it is with an animal, this *bhikṣu* [commits] a *pārājika* and [is] not [allowed to] live in the community.

The two Chinese Dharmaguptaka *prātimokṣa* texts (list of rules; T.1429, p.1015c6–8 and T.1430, p.1023b27–c1)<sup>8</sup> use similar terms for “renouncing the training” (*huan jie* 還戒 and *she jie* 捨戒, respectively) and “not expressing one’s weakness” (*jie lei bu zi hui* 戒羸不自悔). The same rule can also be found in all five other *vinayas*, with the same conditions: Pāli *vinaya*, Vin III, p.23 (*sikkhā-paccakkhānaṃ*, “renouncing the training”; *dubbalyāvikkamma*, “declaring one’s weakness”)<sup>9</sup>; Mahīśāsaka *vinaya*, T.1421, p.4b2–4 (*she (jie)* 捨(戒); *jie lei* 戒羸); Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya*, T.1425, p.235c15–17 (*huan jie* 還戒; *jie lei bu chu* 戒羸不出); Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*, T.1435, p.2a25–27 (*she jie* 捨戒; *jie lei bu chu* 戒羸不出); and Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya*, T.1442, p.629c26–28 (*she xue chu* 捨學處; *xue lei bu zi shuo* 學羸不自說).

The Dharmaguptaka introductory story (T.1428, pp.569c28–571a21) that precedes the first *pārājika* rule relates that the monk Sudinnaputra’s mother asked him to abandon the Dharma and become a householder again in the hope that he would continue the family line and preserve the family’s wealth. Sudinnaputra refuses, but agrees to have intercourse with his former wife. Afterwards, however, he has doubts about his behavior and confesses to his fellow monks. This leads to the rule which states that any *bhikṣu* who engages in impure conduct and indulges in sexual intercourse commits a *pārājika* and is not allowed to live in the monastic community (T.1428, p.570c7–8). Later, though, we learn of a monk who is so unhappy with “the pure conduct” (p.570c13, *bu le jing xing* 不樂淨行) that he returns home (*huan jia* 還家) and has sex with his former wife. Confronted with this case, the Buddha decrees that monks are allowed to renounce their training and return home (p.570c28, *she jie huan jia* 捨戒還家). Interestingly, he adds (p.570c28–29): “If, later, they again want to go forth in the Buddhist Dharma and practice the pure conduct, one should accept them, let them go forth and let them be fully ordained.”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> T.1429 was compiled by the monk Huaisu (634–707 CE) on the basis of T.1428; T.1430 was translated into Chinese by the monk Buddhayaśas at the beginning of the fifth century CE (Clarke, “Vinayas,” 69).

<sup>9</sup> Kieffer-Pülz, “Re-ordination of Former Buddhist Nuns,” 3–4.

<sup>10</sup> Similarly, T.1428, p.972a3–5: “If there are other *bhikṣus* who are troubled and unhappy and who are unhappy in the pure conduct, they are allowed to renounce the training and go. If, later, they again want to practice the pure conduct in the Buddhist

The Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* defines “*bhikṣu*” as a monk who has been properly ordained by a *jñāpticatorthakarman*<sup>11</sup>—the only valid ordination procedure.<sup>12</sup> Merely resembling a monk—for instance, by wearing robes—is insufficient to be considered as a full member of the Buddhist monastic community.<sup>13</sup> All *bhikṣus* should be ordained in the same way (T.1428, p.571a24–b2). The *vinaya* further explains that the term *jie* 戒 (“training”) refers to the precepts (of the *prātimokṣa*) set forth by the Buddha.

Of particular interest for this paper are the guidelines which relate to “not renouncing the training” (*bu she jie* 不捨戒; p.571b4–12). The training is not properly renounced when the formal renouncement statement is made in a state of madness or in front of a mad man; with a disturbed mind or in front of a man with a disturbed mind; when tormented by pain or in front of a man who is tormented by pain; if the monk who renounces is mute, deaf or mute–deaf, or makes his renouncement in front of someone who is mute, deaf or mute–deaf; if a monk from the central area makes his renouncement in front of someone from a border area, or if someone from a border area renounces in front of someone from the central area (the implication probably being that a renouncement must be made among those who are familiar with the context and the specific Buddhist community involved, or who speak the same language and are thus able to understand<sup>14</sup>); if the renouncement is made in a place where

---

Dharma and they return, it is acceptable to let them go forth and give them full ordination.”

<sup>11</sup> An ordination is conferred on completion of a *jñāpticatorthakarman*—a formal act consisting of one motion (*jñāpti*), three propositions (*karmavācanā*), and a conclusion.

<sup>12</sup> As some commentaries on the parallel Pāli *vinaya* story point out, the earliest disciples were ordained by the Buddha himself, before the development of the *jñāpticatorthakarman* procedure, so identifying the latter as the only valid ordination procedure generated considerable debate on how to interpret this rule in case one of the earliest monks was involved (see Petra Kieffer-Pülz, *Verlorene Gaṇḍhipadas zum buddhistischen Ordensrecht. Untersuchungen zu den in der Vajirabuddhiṅkā zitierten Kommentaren Dhammasiris und Vajirabuddhis* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013), Vol. 1, 350–63).

<sup>13</sup> For the Pāli tradition, compare Kieffer-Pülz, “Re-ordination of Former Buddhist Nuns,” 8. Furthermore, as Kieffer-Pülz (*Verlorene Gaṇḍhipadas*, Vol. 3, 1788–1790) has shown, one could argue that the so-called monk acquired his status via “a stealthy mind” (Pāli *theyyasamvāsaka*), a concept I shall discuss below.

<sup>14</sup> Personal communication by Petra Kieffer-Pülz and an anonymous reader.

there are other people but the monk thinks there are none, or if the monk renounces in a place where there are no other people but he thinks there are some;<sup>15</sup> if the monk renounces for fun; if he renounces to a god, a dragon, a *yakṣa*, or a hungry ghost; if he makes his renouncement to someone who is asleep, dead, or ignorant; if he does not speak himself; or if the person he tells it to does not understand.

By contrast, the training is properly renounced (p.572b12–25):

if a *bhikṣu* is not happy with pure conduct and wants to return home; if he dislikes the way *bhikṣus* live; if he often feels shame and longs to be at home; if he longs for the life of an *upāsaka* (lay follower); or if he thinks of a life as a *śrāmaṇera* (novice); or if he wants to be a non-Buddhist or a disciple of a non-Buddhist group; or if he does not want to be a *śramaṇa* or a son of the Śākya; and then says the following: “I renounce the Buddha, I renounce the Dharma, I renounce the *bhikṣusamgha*, I renounce my *upādhyāya* and the disciples of my *upādhyāya*, I renounce my *ācārya* and the disciples of my *ācārya*;<sup>16</sup> I renounce

<sup>15</sup> The literal sentence remains rather unclear (T.1428, p.571b9): 不靜靜想捨戒靜作不靜想捨戒, “if not calm (*jing* 靜), one has calm ideas, and one then renounces the training; or if calm, one does not have calm ideas, and one then renounces the training [, this is not a renouncement of the training].” The main problem concerns the implication of the word “calm” (*jing* 靜). A comparison with the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya* provides some extra information (T.1435, p.630a22–24): 若於獨靜處作獨靜想或於獨靜處作不獨靜想或於不獨靜處作獨靜想非捨學處, “if in a lonely and calm (*du jing* 獨靜) place, one has *du jing* ideas, or if in a *du jing* place, one has non-*du jing* ideas, or if in a non-*du jing* place, one has *du jing* ideas, then this is not a renouncement of the teaching.” This sentence makes sense if we consistently interpret *du jing* as a lonely and therefore calm, quiet place where there are no witnesses: “if in a lonely and quiet place, one thinks it is lonely and quiet; or if in a lonely and quiet place, one thinks it is not lonely and quiet; or if in a place that is not lonely and quiet, one thinks it is lonely and quiet, then this is not a renouncement of the teaching.” If we interpret *jing* 靜 in the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* in a similar fashion, the translation reads as follows: “If in a place that is not quiet, one thinks it is quiet, or if in a quiet place, one thinks it is not quiet and then renounces the training [, this is not a renouncement of the training].” Many thanks to Shi Fa Ling (Ghent University) for pointing out the parallel with the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*.

<sup>16</sup> A monk has two teachers: an *upādhyāya* and an *ācārya*. The differences between the two are not always clear, but generally one can say that an *upādhyāya* assists a candidate for ordination and guides a monk in disciplinary matters, while an *ācārya* teaches lessons on spiritual issues (cf. Georg von Simson et al., *Sanskrit-Wörterbuch der buddhistischen Texte aus den Turfan-Funden und der kanonischen*



the pure conduct, I renounce the training and I renounce the *vinaya*, and I renounce the study. I take upon me the life of a householder, of a lay attendant (*jing ren* 淨人, *kalpikāraka*),<sup>17</sup> of an *upāsaka*, of a *śrāmaṇera*; I become a non-Buddhist or a disciple of a non-Buddhist group; I am not a *śramaṇa* nor a son of the Śākyas.” Also if he says: “I stop. I do not need the Buddha. What advantage does the Buddha give me? I leave the place where the Buddha is ...” and so on until “[I renounce] the study,” then it is likewise. Or if he still uses some other words and breaks with the Buddha, the Dharma and the *saṃgha*, and so on until “[I renounce] the study,” and then praises family business, until “I am not a *śramaṇa* nor a son of the Śākyas,” if his words are clear, it is renouncing of the training.

Expressing weakness with regard to the training (p.572b25–c4) may imply either that a monk is weak with regard to the training but does not renounce it, or that he is weak with regard to the training and renounces it. Being weak with regard to the training without renouncing it is explained as follows:

If a *bhikṣu* is troubled and is not happy with pure conduct, and wants to return home; if he dislikes the way *bhikṣus* live; if he often feels shame and longs to be at home, and so on; and if he does not want to lead the life of a *śramaṇa* nor of a son of the Śākyas, and says: “I think of my parents, of my brothers, of my

---

*Literatur der Sarvāstivāda-Schule* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), Vol. 1, 232, s.v. *ācārya* and 408, s.v. *upādhyāya*).

<sup>17</sup> The use of the term *jing* 淨, ‘to purify’, points to it that 淨人 is meant as a translation of *kalpikāraka*, a lay person who, among other duties, makes matters ‘pure’, that is acceptable or legal for a monk, for instance by accepting donations on his behalf (for a brief discussion, see Clarke, “Monks Who Have Sex,” 27, note 86). Interestingly, the Pāli *vinaya* (Vin III, p.27), uses the term *ārāmika* in this context (with many thanks to Petra Kieffer-Pülz for pointing this out). An *ārāmika* may function as a *kalpikāraka*, but can also have other functions (for a discussion of both terms, see Petra Kieffer-Pülz, “Stretching the Vinaya Rules and Getting Away with It,” *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 29 (2007): 15–21). One might thus speculate that it is not impossible that the original Indic Dharmaguptaka text also had *ārāmika* instead of *kalpikāraka*. On the other hand, in the Chinese Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, the term *ārāmika* is commonly translated with the terms *sengjialan min* 僧伽藍民 and *shou yuan ren* 守園人 (cf. Ann Heirman, *The Discipline in Four Parts’: Rules for Nuns According to the Dharmaguptakavinaya*. Three parts. Buddhist Tradition Series, Vols. 47–49 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2002), part II, 497, note 48 and 854, note 53).

sisters, of my wife and children,<sup>18</sup> of my village, of my city, of my field, of my pool; I want to renounce the Buddha, the Dharma and the *saṃgha*,” and so on until “[I want to renounce] the study,” and he then wants to undertake family business, until “I am not a *śramaṇa* nor a son of the Śākya,” this is expressing his weakness with regard to the training without renouncing the training. ‘To be weak with regard to the training and to renounce the training’ means “that one has this idea: ‘I want to renounce the training (*she jie*).’ And then he renounces the training. That is ‘to be weak with regard to the training and to renounce the training’.

From this, it is clear that various statements may be considered as formal renouncements of the training, as long as the monk actually utters the phrase *she jie* 捨戒 (“I renounce the training”) in the presence of a knowledgeable witness who understands the full implications of what the monk is saying. Merely acknowledging or expressing weakness does not equate to renouncement.

Therefore, we may conclude that any monk who wants to return to family life and have sexual intercourse with his wife is allowed to do so after making a formal renouncement of the training (*she jie*). This means of leaving the monastic community and returning home is mentioned only in the first *pārājika* rule; it does not feature in the subsequent rules on killing, stealing, and lying about spiritual achievements. This is logical as neither a monastic nor a lay person is allowed to kill or steal, while the rule on lying about spiritual achievements is relevant only for monks. So, withdrawing in order to violate these rules makes no sense.

This could lead to the conclusion that a formal, legitimate withdrawal from the monastic community is permissible only for those monks who find it difficult to lead a celibate life. However, the renouncement text is much broader in scope. It also speaks of the desire to become a non-Buddhist, or, even more remarkably, of the desire to drop one step down and become a *śrāmaṇera* (novice) again. This is very surprising in the context of the first *pārājika* rule, since the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* clearly states that other members of the monastic community must be punished if they indulge in sexual intercourse (T.1428, p.572b1–3): “A *bhikṣuṇī* [commits] a *pārājika*; a *śikṣamāṇā* (probationer),<sup>19</sup> a *śrāmaṇera* (male

<sup>18</sup> On the family relations of monks and nuns, see Shayne Clarke, *Family Matters in Indian Buddhist Monasticisms* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> *Śikṣamāṇā* (probationer) is the stage between novice and nun; there is no equivalent male stage.

novice) and a *śrāmaṇerī* (female novice) [commit] a *duṣkṛta*<sup>20</sup> and are to be expelled (*mie pin* 滅擯).<sup>21</sup> Although the full consequences of expulsion imposed on probationers and novices are not entirely clear, here, it is important to note that the *vinaya* stipulates that any member of the monastic community who engages in sexual activity will be severely punished. Consequently, renouncing one’s full ordination and stepping down to the novice level will not resolve a monk’s sexual problems. In that sense, the renouncement text serves a broader purpose than merely clarifying the first *pārājika* rule.

Other sections of the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* also discuss formal renouncement. One such passage (T.1428, p.991a1–8) explains that the following statements are equivalent to declaring, “I renounce the training” (*she jie*):

I renounce the Buddha, I renounce the Dharma, I renounce the *saṃgha*, I renounce my *upādhyāya* and the disciples of my *upādhyāya*, I renounce my *ācārya* and the disciples of my *ācārya*, I renounce the *bhikṣus* of pure conduct, I renounce the *vinaya*, and I renounce the study; I take upon me the life of a layman, of a *kalpikāraka* (*shou yuan ren* 守園人)<sup>22</sup>, of an *upāsaka*, of a *śrāmaṇera*; I become a non-Buddhist or a disciple of a non-Buddhist group; I am not a *śramaṇa* nor a son of the Śākya.<sup>23</sup>

Clearly, this allows for more flexibility than insisting the monk must announce, “I renounce the training” (as per the earlier guideline; p.572b12–25). However, the monk must still make a firm statement of renouncement; merely *thinking* that he is no longer a *bhikṣu* is insufficient. Unfortunately, the *vinaya* does not provide any clarification on the contexts in which these alternative phrases may be used. Consequently, it remains unclear precisely when a formal withdrawal may be initiated, although the renouncement text itself seems to indicate that there are no

<sup>20</sup> Literally “a bad deed”—a light offense (cf. Heirman, *The Discipline in Four Parts*, part I, 148–149).

<sup>21</sup> On *mie pin* 滅擯, Pāli *nāsanā* (expulsion) in the Theravāda context, see Édith Nolot, “Studies in Vinaya Technical Terms IV–X,” *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 25 (1999): 58–69; Ute Hüsken, “The Application of the *Vinaya* Term *Nāsanā*,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 20.2 (1997): 93–111.

<sup>22</sup> On this term, see also note 17.

<sup>23</sup> Similar explanations appear in abbreviated form at T.1428, p.993c24–25; p.998c20–22; p.1002a29–b3; p.1008c15–17; p.1011b15–18; and p.1012c14–18.

restrictions. The main concept appears to be that a monk formally renounces his training if and when he no longer wants to be a *bhikṣu*, which frees him from the rules of the *prātimokṣa* (although, of course, he still has to abide by the rules of lay society). In that sense, the first *pārājika* rule in which formal renouncement is explicitly mentioned, sets the framework of subsequent *prātimokṣa* rules: they apply to fully ordained monks who have not withdrawn.<sup>24</sup> This interpretation fits well with the story of a young monk who undergoes full ordination, works very hard on his spiritual progress, but fails to reach enlightenment. This raises doubts in his mind and he contemplates renouncing his training and going home (*she jie huan jia* 戒還家) to his parents. The Buddha explains that enlightenment is achieved only by progressing at the correct speed: moving too slowly and trying to advance too quickly both result in failure (p.844a28–c2). In this context, the term *she jie* is used in a very general sense: a monk does not perceive his own progress and wants to abandon the path to enlightenment. This seems to suggest that formal renouncement is permissible in any number of difficult situations. Nevertheless, some caution is required. We have only the Chinese translation of this text, and the translator may have used the term *she jie* not only to describe a formal act of renouncement (with a formal statement) but also to denote an informal withdrawal from the monastic community.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, in light of this, one could even hypothesize that the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* fails to distinguish between formal and informal withdrawal, aside from when the discussion relates to the first *pārājika*

<sup>24</sup> With many thanks to an anonymous reader for this suggestion.

<sup>25</sup> The Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* contains several more references to monks who renounce the training (*she jie*) without ever offering a clear indication as to why, or in which circumstances, they may do so. So, for instance, if a monk keeps a robe on behalf of another monk but then renounces his training, the monk who asked for help has no responsibility for what happens to his robe (T.1428, p.632a15–17; this refers to shared ownership of robes; for details, see Heirman, *The Discipline in Four Parts*, part II, 488, note 12). Also, in three discussions about who should be prevented from attending the *poṣadha* ceremony (during which the *prātimokṣa* is recited), monks who have committed a *pārājika* offense and those who have renounced the teaching are explicitly mentioned (p.906c2–10; pp.906c24–907a1; p.1011b28–c4). Finally, we are also told that the monk Ānanda had sixty young disciples who longed to return home and renounce their training (p.930a27), and a single sentence (p.1006c1, c4) explains that Buddhist teaching will suffer if many monks renounce their training and go away (*fang she jie xing* 放捨戒行).

rule. This hypothesis is contradicted, however, by several passages in which a clear distinction is made without any reference to the first *pārājika*. For instance, we read of a monk in a troubled state of mind who wants to renounce the training (*she jie*). In desperation, he tries to commit suicide, but accidentally kills another monk instead (p.983a11–15). This act is not considered a *pārājika* offense, since the monk had no intention of killing his fellow monastic. However, his unsuccessful suicide bid is viewed as a *sthūlātyaya* offense. (This is a very serious offense; in most cases, it refers to a monastic who comes close to violating—or narrowly fails in a deliberate attempt to violate—a *pārājika* or *saṃghāvaśeṣa* rule, the two most serious categories in the *prātimokṣa*.<sup>26</sup>) This story is followed by an exact parallel (p.983a15–19) in which a monk wants to *abandon* the teaching—*xiu dao* 休道, a term that is used for informal withdrawal from the monastic community, as I explain below. These successive stories clearly indicate that the *vinaya*'s editors were aware of two contrasting ways in which a monk may leave the *saṃgha*: formal renouncement and informal withdrawal. In this context, the use of two wholly different terms cannot be interpreted as a simple example of inconsistent translation.<sup>27</sup>

### 2.1.2. The formal withdrawal of nuns

While all six *vinayas* discuss formal withdrawal for monks, this is not the case for nuns. As I will discuss below, the *vinayas* have a variety of viewpoints on this issue.

#### *Pārājika* rule 1

As we saw earlier, the first *pārājika* rule explicitly permits monks to withdraw from the Buddhist community, possibly for any reason they choose. However, similar permission is not necessarily granted to nuns. The *prātimokṣa* rules for nuns of the various traditions present a mixed picture with respect to the first *pārājika* rule. In the Dharmaguptaka school

<sup>26</sup> For more on this interpretation of *sthūlātyaya* offenses in the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, see Heirman, *The Discipline in Four Parts*, part I, 158–160.

<sup>27</sup> A similar distinction between a monk who *renounces* the training (*she jie*) and one who *abandons* the teaching (*xiu dao*) is made at p.1010b18–20. This does not imply, however, that some mixing of the two terms never occurred. One passage, at least, seems to point in that direction: on p.1011b3, sixty monks “*abandon* the teaching.” The Chinese term that is used is a juxtaposition of *she jie* and *xiu dao*: 捨戒休道.

the rule (T.1431, *bhikṣuṇīprātimokṣa*, p.1031b16–17;<sup>28</sup> similar to Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, T.1428, p.714a14–150) simply states: “If a *bhikṣuṇī* indulges in sexual intercourse and has impure conduct even with an animal, this *bhikṣuṇī* [commits] a *pārājika* and [is] not [allowed to] live in the community.”<sup>29</sup> The other traditions have various opinions.

In the Pāli *bhikkhunīpātimokkha* the first *pārājika* rule does not discuss any possibility of withdrawal for nuns.<sup>30</sup> (The Pāli *vinaya* itself contains only those rules that apply specifically to nuns.) According to Petra Kieffer-Pülz, the monks’ rule was adjusted for application to nuns, which must have occurred at a relatively early date. While the Pāli *vinaya* does not include the first *pārājika* rule for nuns (because this rule is identical for monks and nuns), it does explicitly state that (formal) renunciation of the training is not an option for nuns (Vin II, p.279).<sup>31</sup>

As in the Pāli *vinaya*, the Mahīśāsaka *vinaya* includes only those rules that apply specifically to nuns. However, the *bhikṣuṇīprātimokṣa* cites a rule that parallels one for *bhikṣus* (T.1423, pp.206c29–207a2): “If a *bhikṣuṇī* has the same training as other *bhikṣuṇīs*, and if she is weak with regard to the training, but does not renounce the training accordingly, and if she then indulges in sexual intercourse, even if it is with an animal, this *bhikṣuṇī* commits a *pārājika* and [is] not [allowed to] live in community.” Here, though, it is worth noting that the Mahīśāsaka *bhikṣuṇīprātimokṣa* was compiled by the Chinese monk Shi Minghui 釋明徽 in 522,<sup>32</sup> so it does not necessarily represent the opinion of the Indian school.

The Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya* lists all eight *pārājika* rules for nuns in full, and states (T.1425, p.514b16–18): “If a *bhikṣuṇī* does not renounce the training and does not express her weakness with regard to the training,

<sup>28</sup> T.1431 was compiled by the monk Huaisu (634–707 CE), who extracted the rules from the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* (T.1428), translated in the fifth century by Buddhayaśas (cf. Clarke, “Vinayas,” 69).

<sup>29</sup> One variant reading is parallel, however, to the *bhikṣuṇīprātimokṣa*. It appears in the so-called palace (*gong* 宮) edition, a twelfth-century edition belonging to the Japanese imperial library (cf. Ciyi 慈怡 (ed.), *Foguang da cidian* 佛光大辭典. Seven vols. (Gaoxiong: Foguang Chubanshe; reprint, Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 1989), Vol. 3, 2862, s.v. 宋).

<sup>30</sup> For a translation, see K.R. Norman and William Pruitt (ed. and trans.), *The Pātimokkha* (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2001), 116–117.

<sup>31</sup> Kieffer-Pülz, “Re-ordination of Former Buddhist Nuns,” 3–6.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Clarke, “Vinayas,” 70.

and then indulges in sexual intercourse even with an animal, this *bhikṣuṇī* commits a *pārājika* and is not allowed to live in the community.”<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, the *vinaya* adds that a *bhikṣuṇī* who returns to lay life without making a formal withdrawal from the community has committed an offense; and the same is true if she becomes a non-Buddhist ascetic (p.514c6–7). Presumably this means that any nun who does not make a formal withdrawal technically remains a Buddhist *bhikṣuṇī*, so she continues to be subject to all of the rules of the *prātimokṣa*. Closely related to the Mahāsāṃghika school is the Mahāsāṃghika–Lokottaravāda school, of which an Indic *bhikṣuṇīvibhaṅga* (chapter for nuns) has survived. Contrary to the Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya*, however, this explicitly states that there is no formal withdrawal procedure for nuns.<sup>34</sup>

The Sarvāstivāda *vinaya* does not include any rules that are shared by nuns and monks. The *bhikṣuṇīprātimokṣa*, however, enumerates all of the *pārājika* rules for nuns, including (T.1437, p.479b29–c2): “If a *bhikṣuṇī* has the same training as other *bhikṣuṇīs*, and if she does not renounce the training and does not express that she is weak with regard to the training, and if she then indulges in sexual intercourse, even if it is with an animal, this *bhikṣuṇī* commits a *pārājika* and is not allowed to live in the community.” The text is attributed to the monk Faying, and is supposedly based on the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*,<sup>35</sup> even though, in this instance, the *prātimokṣa* provides more information than the *vinaya*.

Finally, the Chinese Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya* lists all eight rules for monks and nuns. It also mentions a formal withdrawal procedure for nuns, so that they may return to lay life and, as lay persons, engage in sexual

<sup>33</sup> For a translation into English and a brief discussion, see Akira Hirakawa (in collaboration with Zenno Ikuno and Paul Groner), *Monastic Discipline for the Buddhist Nuns: An English Translation of the Chinese Text of the Mahāsāṃghika–Bhikṣuṇī–Vinaya* (Patna: Kashi Jayaswal Research Institute, 1982), 101–109. The *bhikṣuṇīprātimokṣa* (T.1427; although traditionally seen as a translation by the monks Faxian and Buddhahadra, it seems that the text is an extract of the *vinaya* that was corrupted during its transmission in China; cf. Clarke, “Vinayas,” 64) contains a similar *pārājika* rule for nuns (T.1427, p.556c4–7).

<sup>34</sup> Gustav Roth, *Bhikṣuṇī–Vinaya, Including Bhikṣuṇī–Prakīrṇaka and a Summary of the Bhikṣu–Prakīrṇaka of the Ārya–Mahāsāṃghika–Lokottaravādin* (Patna: Kashi Jayaswal Research Institute, 1970), 75; for a translation into French, see Édith Nolot, *Règles de discipline des nonnes bouddhistes, le bhikṣuṇīvinaya de l'école Mahāsāṃghika–Lokottaravādin* (Paris: Collège de France, 1991), 61.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Clarke, “Vinayas,” 72.

intercourse (T.1443, p.913a19–21): “If a *bhikṣuṇī* has the same training as other *bhikṣuṇīs*, and if she does not renounce the training and does not express that she is weak with regard to the training, and if she then has impure conduct and indulges in sexual intercourse, even if it is with an animal, this *bhikṣuṇī* commits a *pārājika* and is not allowed to live in the community.”<sup>36</sup>

Clearly, then, the various schools have contrasting opinions on whether a nun may make a formal withdrawal from the monastic community. (However, as we shall see below, this does not mean that the schools also hold different viewpoints on the potential re-ordination of a nun who has left the *saṃgha* either formally or informally.) Formal withdrawal legitimates a woman’s return to lay life, meaning she is no longer subject to the rules of the *prātimokṣa*. She can thus lead the full life of a lay woman, including engaging in sexual intercourse. By contrast, if formal withdrawal is not permitted, the woman will technically remain a Buddhist nun in the eyes of the *saṃgha* even if she physically leaves the community and lives as a lay woman. She will thus commit offenses as outlined in the rules of the *prātimokṣa*, for instance by engaging in sexual intercourse. This, at least, is how the Mahāsāṃghika school understands the issue. The other schools are much less definitive.

#### *Samghāvaśeṣa* rule 16

Thus far, we have seen that no formal withdrawal procedure is outlined for nuns in the first *pārājika* rule in the Dharmaguptaka school. However, the concept of withdrawal is not wholly absent from the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, as is evident in one of the *saṃghāvaśeṣa* rules—the violation of which requires a procedure of the *saṃgha*, possibly leading to temporary exclusion. *Samghāvaśeṣa* 16 states that a *bhikṣuṇī* has committed a *saṃghāvaśeṣa* offense if she continues to renounce the Buddha, the Dharma, and the *saṃgha* after a series of reprimands from her fellow nuns. The full rule (T.1428, p.726a20–b2) states:<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Similarly in T.1455, p.508c10–12 (Chinese Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhikṣuṇīprātimokṣa*).

<sup>37</sup> Similarly, in the Dharmaguptaka *bhikṣuṇīprātimokṣa*, T.1431, p.1032a29–b10. Furthermore, the other extant *vinayas* contain a similar rule: Pāli *vinaya*, Vin IV, p.241 (see Kieffer-Pülz, “Re-ordination of Former Buddhist Nuns,” 6); Mahīśāsaka *vinaya*, T.1421, pp.82c25–83a5; Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya*, T.1425, pp.523c29–524a8;



If a *bhikṣuṇī*, just like that, because of one small fact, is angry and unhappy, and if she says the following: “I renounce (*she* 捨) the Buddha, I renounce the Dharma, and I renounce the *saṃgha*. There are not only these *śramaṇas*, daughters of Śākya. There are also other *śramaṇas*, *brāhmaṇas*, who observe the pure conduct. We can observe the pure conduct with them too,” the *bhikṣuṇīs* have to admonish that *bhikṣuṇī*: “Sister, be not, just like that, because of one small fact, angry and unhappy, and do not say the following: ‘I renounce the Buddha, I renounce the Dharma, and I renounce the *saṃgha*. There are not only these *śramaṇas*, daughters of Śākya. There are also other *śramaṇas*, *brāhmaṇas*, who observe the pure conduct. We can observe the pure conduct with them too.’” If, at the moment when the *bhikṣuṇīs* admonish that *bhikṣuṇī*, she sticks to the case and does not give up, the *bhikṣuṇīs* must admonish her three times so that she gives up this case. If she gives up after the third admonition, that is good. If she does not give up, this *bhikṣuṇī* violates a rule on the third occasion, a *saṃghāvaśeṣa* that has to be given up.<sup>38</sup>

Clearly, the *bhikṣuṇī*’s statements in this *saṃghāvaśeṣa* rule could be interpreted as a “formal withdrawal,” yet the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* does not reach this conclusion. In the *skandhaka* (chapter) on nuns, the *vinaya* (T.1428, p.927a3–7) states:

At that time, the group of six *bhikṣuṇīs*<sup>39</sup> were angry and unhappy for very little reason. They renounced the Buddha, the Dharma, and the *saṃgha* and said: “There are not only these *śramaṇas*, daughters of Śākya with whom we can observe the pure conduct. There are also other *śramaṇas*, *brāhmaṇas*. We can also with them observe the pure conduct.” The *bhikṣus* told the Buddha, and the Buddha said: “If *bhikṣuṇīs* in anger renounce the training (*she jie* 捨戒), they still do not achieve ‘the renouncement of training’ (*bu cheng she jie* 不成捨戒).”

In other words, according to the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, nuns—at least those who are angry—cannot formally renounce the training.

---

Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*, T.1435, p.311a19–b2; Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya*, T.1443, p.937b13–19.

<sup>38</sup> “That has to be given up” is a translation of the Chinese technical term *ying she* (應捨). It refers to the fact that a *bhikṣuṇī* may be fully reinstated in the community as long as she abandons her bad behavior. If she fails to do so, her punishment under the *saṃghāvaśeṣa* rule will continue. For further details, see Heirman, *The Discipline in Four Parts*, part II, 388–389.

<sup>39</sup> *Bhikṣuṇīs* who behaved badly were often presented as a group of six.

## 2.2. *Informal withdrawal from the monastic community*

In addition to highlighting monks' and nuns' contrasting opportunities for formal withdrawal, the texts quoted above raise the question of a potential difference between formal and informal withdrawal. Does the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* discuss informal withdrawal? And if it does, what are the consequences for the monks and nuns who choose to leave? The first question is easy to answer: several passages describe monks and nuns leaving the *samgha* without first renouncing the training. The text is much more equivocal on the consequences of such behavior, however. Indeed, the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* explores the issue further only when former monastics attempt to rejoin the Buddhist monastic community.

### 2.2.1. *The informal withdrawal of monks*

In the Pāli *vinaya* the term *vibbhamati* (Skt. *vi-√bhram*) — “to stray, to wander or roam about”—is used to describe the process of leaving the *samgha* without going through the formal renouncement procedure.<sup>40</sup> The Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* uses the term *xiu dao* 休道 (sometimes *huan xiu dao* 還休道) to describe similar circumstances. For instance, a number of sick men join the Buddhist community in order to undergo treatment by the famous monastic doctor Jīvaka, then abandon the teaching (*(huan) xiu dao* (還)休道) once they have recovered. To resolve this issue, the *vinaya* stipulates that patients should not be ordained if they enter the community for treatment (T.1428, pp.808c2–809a8).<sup>41</sup>

The consequences of informal withdrawal are discussed in the case of a monk who has been temporarily suspended (*ju* 舉). This relatively severe punishment is dispensed, for instance, when someone refuses to give up wrong views (T.1428, p.816a11–23).<sup>42</sup> The suspended monk does not want

<sup>40</sup> On this term, see Kieffer-Pülz, “Re-ordination of Former Buddhist Nuns,” 6–12; Bhikkhu Sujato, *Bhikkhuni Vinaya Studies: Research and Reflections on Monastic Discipline for Buddhist Nuns* (Australia: Santipada Publications, 2009), 119–120 ([http://www.thaibuddhism.net/pdf/Bhikkhuni\\_Vinaya\\_Studies\\_5.1.pdf](http://www.thaibuddhism.net/pdf/Bhikkhuni_Vinaya_Studies_5.1.pdf); last accessed 12.11.2016).

<sup>41</sup> For a discussion of the Pāli parallel, see Kieffer-Pülz, “Re-ordination of Former Buddhist Nuns,” 7–8.

<sup>42</sup> “Wrong views” are those that go against the Buddhist teaching. On the term *ju* 舉 in the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, see Heirman, *The Discipline in Four Parts*, part II,

to remain within the Buddhist community and abandons the teaching (*xiu dao*). Later, however, he wishes to return and go forth again (*chu jia* 出). He learns that this is possible, but first he must acknowledge his earlier transgression. So, he is asked: “Do you see your offense (*ru zi jian zui bu* 汝自見罪不)?” If he does not, he may not go forth. If he does, he may go forth. After going forth, he is asked again whether he sees his offense. If he answers that he does, he may be re-ordained. If he does not, he may not. However, he is not yet a full member of the *samgha* after his re-ordination; rather, he still lives under suspension, which implies that he does not have the same rights as the other monks. Hence, he is given the opportunity to undergo a rehabilitation procedure. He is first asked whether he is prepared to repent (*ru neng chan hui bu*: 汝能懺悔不). If he answers that he is, the rehabilitation process may begin: *jie* (*zui*) 解(罪), Skt. *avasāraṇa* (Pāli *osāraṇa*), a procedure that is used to reinstate a monk after a suspension.<sup>43</sup> Following the rehabilitation procedure, the monk is asked to repent. If he does, he is allowed to rejoin the community as a full member. If he does not, the *samgha* may charge him again. However, if the *samgha* fails to reach agreement on the monk’s fate, the case against him is dropped. The important point for this paper is that a monk who left the *samgha* informally is allowed to rejoin. But this does not mean he starts again with a clean slate; his earlier offense must be taken into account and resolved.<sup>44</sup>

---

322–324, note 279. For a discussion of the Pāli parallel, see Kieffer-Pülz, “Re-ordination of Former Buddhist Nuns,” 8–9.

<sup>43</sup> For details, see Heirman, *The Discipline in Four Parts*, part II, 320–321, note 271.

<sup>44</sup> Other elements of a re-ordained monk’s earlier monastic life are not discussed, however. For instance, no information is provided on the seniority a re-ordained monk may have accumulated in his earlier time in the *samgha*. The Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* also mentions other instances of teachers or disciples abandoning the teaching without giving details of whether or how they might rejoin the community at a later date: on p.804c5–8, p.806a18–b1, and p.1004a6–18 we are told that guidance ceases whenever a teacher or a disciple abandons the teaching. On p.603a15, p.605c2, and p.623a6, we learn that if a monk who is in possession of another monk’s robes or begging bowl abandons the teaching, the other monk is not responsible for what happens to his robes or begging bowl. In another passage, a monk misses a meal and his fellow monks are worried that something might have happened to him, or that he has abandoned the teaching (p.663a1–4). Finally, some information is provided on the correct course of action when a monk who assists another monk during ceremonies abandons the teaching (p.822a9, p.822b8,

Other passages in the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* suggest that informally abandoning the teaching is very close or even identical to simply walking away. For instance, we learn of a very capable minister, a good military tactician, who goes forth among the *bhikṣus* (T.1428, p.834a10–15). However, the king asks him to abandon the teaching (*xiu dao*), return to his wife, and take care of his household. The monk realizes that this places him in a difficult position so he seeks counsel from the Buddha, who allows him to go (*qu* 去). Similarly, the Buddha allows other monastics to leave, apparently without any formal procedure, when they express concerns about family matters or even when they have trouble resisting sexual temptation. For instance, when a young lady from a prominent family visits the *bhikṣus*, tells them that she would make a good wife, and asks them to abandon the teaching (*xiu dao*), one monk is attracted to her. He confesses to the Buddha, who allows him to go (*qu*) (p.834a15–19). A similar situation arises when a prostitute visits the *bhikṣus* (p.834a19–24).

These cases suggest that leaving the *saṃgha* may have been a relatively informal process in the early years of Buddhism, even when the motive for leaving was sexual. The Buddha simply allows monks to leave if they ask his advice. Consequently, the formal procedure of renouncing the training (*she jie*) may be seen as a later addition. This hypothesis is supported by the case of a monk who confesses that he dreamed of sexual contact with his former wife and now feels so guilty that he wants to abandon the teaching (*xiu dao*). The text does not indicate that he wishes to renounce the training (*she jie*), even though this situation closely resembles cases discussed in the first *pārājika* rule. The monk is assured that leaving the *saṃgha* is unnecessary because his transgression took place in a dream, so he has not actually committed a *pārājika* offense (T.1428, p.922b25–c4).

In conclusion, the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* clearly acknowledges that monks may abandon the teaching or even just walk away from the community. Re-ordination seems eminently possible in the aftermath of such abandonment, since even monks who have left the *saṃgha* in the middle of a serious dispute that has resulted in their suspension are allowed to rejoin, albeit initially with the suspension still in force.

---

p.838a15, p.838b6), or when a teacher abandons the teaching during the rain retreat (p.825b2).

### 2.2.2. *The informal withdrawal of nuns*

In contrast to the very limited discussion on *bhikṣuṇīs*' formal withdrawal, all of the extant *vinaya* texts acknowledge that nuns may leave the community informally. This is most explicit in the seventh *pārājika* rule for nuns, which in the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* (T.1428, pp.716c29–717a4) states:<sup>45</sup>

If a *bhikṣuṇī* knows that a *bhikṣuṇī* commits a *pārājika* and if she does not disclose it herself, if she does not report it to several persons, and if she does not disclose it to the full community, and if then, at another time, the other *bhikṣuṇī* dies (*ming zhong* 命終), or is suspended from the order (*zhong zhong ju* 眾中舉),<sup>46</sup> or abandons the teaching (*xiu dao* 修道), or joins a non-Buddhist order (*ru wai dao zhong* 入外道眾), and if she then says the following: “I already knew that she committed such and such offense,” this *bhikṣuṇī* [commits] a *pārājika* and [is] not [allowed] to live in community, because of the concealment of a grave offense.

In the introductory story that precedes this rule (p.716c19–23), we learn that the other *bhikṣuṇī* abandoned the teaching, was expelled (*mie pin* 滅擯),<sup>47</sup> was barred from the order (*zhong seng zhe* 眾僧遮),<sup>48</sup> or joined an order of non-Buddhists.<sup>49</sup> For this paper, the crucial term is *xiu dao* 修道 (“abandon the teaching”), which is explained (p.717a7) as “to leave this [i.e. Buddhist] path/life” (*xiu dao zhe, chu ci fa wai* 修道者，出此法外).

<sup>45</sup> All of the other extant *vinayas* also contain this rule: Pāli *vinaya*, Vin IV, pp.216–217 (which does not mention informal withdrawal, but does refer to a nun who is expelled or joins an order of non-Buddhists); Mahīśāsaka *vinaya*, T.1421, p.79a1–4 (which refers to a nun who goes far away, is expelled, and abandons the teaching (*ba dao* 罷道)); Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya*, T.1425, p.516b25–28 (which refers to a nun who leaves or abandons the teaching (*ba dao* 罷道)); Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*, T.1435, p.304a22–27 (which refers to a nun who withdraws (*tui* 退), is expelled, or goes away); Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya*, T.1443, p.931a11–14 (which refers to a nun who returns to lay life or goes away).

<sup>46</sup> On the term *ju* 舉, see note 42, above.

<sup>47</sup> On the term *mie pin* 滅擯, see note 21, above. See also T.1428, p.717a7–8: “to expel is that the *saṃgha* carries out a *jñāptīcaturthakarman* for her and expels her.”

<sup>48</sup> *Zhe* 遮 (“to be barred”; √*sthā*, caus. *sthāpaya*) means that she is prohibited from attending the main ceremonies, such as the *poṣadha* and *pravāraṇā*, at which the *prātimokṣa* (list of rules) is recited; cf. Heirman, *The Discipline in Four Parts*, part II, 313–314, note 216.

<sup>49</sup> Similarly, also T.1428, p.925c18–24 (at the nuns' ordination ceremony).

Although no formal procedure is outlined, it is clear that the *vinaya* accepts that a nun may leave the path. Moreover, similar references to nuns abandoning the path may be found in other parts of the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*. For instance, it is said that a *bhikṣuṇī* commits a *saṃghāvaśeṣa* offense if she crosses water alone. However, no offense is committed if her companion has abandoned the teaching (*xiu dao*) or gone far away (*yuan xing* 遠行) before the now solitary nun crosses the water (T.1428, p.721a20–21). Similarly, a *bhikṣuṇī* does not commit an offense if the *bhikṣuṇī* to whom she has assigned a begging bowl or other receptacle, or the *bhikṣus* with whom she spends the summer retreat, leave the Buddhist community (T.1428, p.731c19–20, p.732a25–26, and p.766b29).<sup>50</sup> We are also told of nuns who abandon the teaching after a dispute. For instance, one *bhikṣuṇī* invites another nun to spend the summer retreat in her dwelling, but then chases her away halfway through. As a result, the other *bhikṣuṇī* abandons the teaching (p.745c10, c20).<sup>51</sup> Also, when two *bhikṣuṇīs* commit a *pācittika* offense when they give a robe to a novice who has abandoned the teaching or to one who has joined a non-Buddhist group (pp.750c26–751a22).<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, the novice who has abandoned the teaching is termed a “lay person” (*bai yi* 白衣), defined as “a person who lives at home” (p.751a14, *bai yi zhe zai jia ren* 白衣者，在家人). Clearly, then, a nun becomes a lay person after she abandons the teaching.

Therefore, the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* accepts that both monks and nuns may informally abandon the community or indeed just walk away. However, the question remains whether former *bhikṣuṇīs* may subsequently seek re-ordination. There is some guidance on this issue in the chapter on ordination, specifically in the passages relating to the questions that must be posed to candidates. These questions are discussed in detail below.

<sup>50</sup> On the rules pertaining to spending the summer retreat in a place where there are *bhikṣus*, see Heirman, *The Discipline in Four Parts*, part II, 877–879.

<sup>51</sup> See also p.752a19–b3: two *bhikṣuṇīs* quarrel and both abandon the teaching in consequence.

<sup>52</sup> A *pācittika* (or variants) is an offense that must be expiated; cf. Heirman, *The Discipline in Four Parts*, part I, 141–147.

### 2.3. *Impediments to ordination*

Every candidate for full ordination must answer a series of questions about possible impediments to their joining the *saṃgha*. If the candidate fails to answer any of these questions satisfactorily, she/he is not ordained. Therefore, the *saṃgha* uses this question–and–answer process to prevent unsuitable candidates from entering the Buddhist community. In this paper, I focus specifically on those questions that relate to re-ordination.

Second ordinations and monastics' earlier renouncement of the training are not mentioned in the Pāli *vinaya*'s lists of questions (Vin I, p.93 for monks; Vin II, p.271 for nuns), but all of the other *vinayas* stipulate that candidates must provide satisfactory answers to questions on these topics.<sup>53</sup> For instance, the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* explicitly asks about the candidate's former monastic life (T.1428, p.814c11–18, pp.814c24–815a2). First of all, monks are asked whether they have ever committed a *pārājika* offense (*bian zui* 邊罪),<sup>54</sup> a transgression that only fully ordained monks and nuns can commit. Hence, it is safe to assume that this question refers to a former period as a fully ordained monastic. This is confirmed by the parallel question in the *Tanwude lübu za jiemo* 曇無德律部雜羯磨, the *Karmavācanā of the Dharmaguptaka School*, a procedural manual (T.1432, p.1042b13–22).<sup>55</sup> The latter text asks: “Have you ever been a *bhikṣu*, and if so, have you followed the precepts in a pure way, and did you renounce the training (*huan jie* 還戒)<sup>56</sup> according to the

<sup>53</sup> For a short discussion, see Kieffer-Pülz, “Re-ordination of Former Buddhist Nuns,” 25–27.

<sup>54</sup> On the term *bian zui* 邊罪, see Ciyi, *Foguang da cidian*, Vol. 7, 6709.

<sup>55</sup> Although most Chinese catalogues attribute the translation of this text to the Indian master Saṃghavarman in the middle of the third century CE, analysis of the surviving text has revealed that it is probably a compilation based on the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* (T.1428), produced after that *vinaya* was translated into Chinese in the early fifth century CE. Nevertheless, it is not identical to T.1428. See Hirakawa Akira 平川彰, *Ritsuzō no Kenkyū* 律藏の研究 (A Study of the Vinaya–Piṭaka) (Tokyo: Sankibō Busshorin, 1970), 202–218, 252–253; Heirman, “Can We Trace the Early Dharmaguptakas?,” 402–407.

<sup>56</sup> The term *huan jie* 還戒 (“to return the training”) probably refers to the *she jie* 捨戒 (“to renounce the training”) procedure.

regulations?”<sup>57</sup> Clearly, the *karmavācanā* text goes even further than the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* by inquiring not only about previous *pārājika* offenses but about all of the Buddhist precepts and whether the candidate renounced them in the correct manner.

The next question in the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* (T.1428, p.814c14) asks: “Have you broken two teachings (*ru fei huai er dao* 汝非壞二道)?” This *vinaya* explains that a monk had been a member of a non-Buddhist ascetic group, then became a Buddhist, then returned to the non-Buddhist group, and is now applying to become a Buddhist again. This is not permitted, because the candidate has been unfaithful to two ascetic communities (T.1428, pp.806c10–807b18).<sup>58</sup> Hence, he cannot be re-ordained into the *saṃgha*.

Strikingly, the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* does not include any questions about female candidates’ former monastic lives (T.1428, p.924c15–24, p.925a7–13). Hence, in this sense, the *vinaya*’s questions on potential impediments do not offer any guidance on *bhikṣuṇī* re-ordination. By contrast, the *Sifen biqiuni jiemo* 四分比丘尼羯磨, *Dharmaguptaka Karmavācanā for Bhikṣuṇīs* (T.1434, p.1066c10–16), does pose the two questions mentioned above: “Have you ever committed a *pārājika* offense?”; and “Have you ever broken Buddhist and non-Buddhist teachings?” However, some caution is needed. Although Guṇavarman (367–431 CE) is traditionally cited as the translator of the *Sifen biqiuni jiemo*, in reality it was probably based on the *Jiemo* 羯磨, a Dharmaguptaka *karmavācanā* text for monks, which in turn was based on T.1428, the Chinese translation of the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*.<sup>59</sup> If this is indeed the true provenance, it is hardly surprising that the text contains

<sup>57</sup> The questions asked in a second Dharmaguptaka *karmavācanā* text, *Jiemo* 羯磨 (T.1433, p.1053b7–18), are exact parallels of those in the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, T.1428. According to tradition, T.1433 was translated into Chinese in the middle of the third century, but in reality it was probably compiled on the basis of the Chinese Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, T.1428 (cf. Hirakawa, *Ritsuzō no Kenkyū*, 202–218, 252–253).

<sup>58</sup> It is important to note that the *vinaya* allows full ordination of a member of a non-Buddhist ascetic community as long as the candidate serves a probation period of four months satisfactorily (T.1428, p.807a3–b12). Problems arise only when a non-Buddhist ascetic enters the *saṃgha*, then abandons the Buddhist teaching and returns to the non-Buddhists, then asks to rejoin the Buddhist community.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Hirakawa, *Ritsuzō no Kenkyū*, 202–218.



these two questions. Other *vinayas* ask similar, although not quite identical, questions of male and female candidates.

In the Mahīśāsaka *vinaya* (T.1421, p.118a21–25) each male candidate is asked whether he has ever gone forth, and, if so, whether he practiced pure conduct. The introductory text indicates that the *saṃgha* is particularly interested in the candidate’s adherence to the *pārājika* precepts: before returning to family life, he should have formally renounced the training (*she jie*). The Mahīśāsaka *vinaya* (p.118a17–20) also does not permit the re-ordination of a candidate who was once a Buddhist monk, left to join a non-Buddhist ascetic group, but now wants to return to the *saṃgha*.<sup>60</sup> As in the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, none of the questions that are put to female candidates in this *vinaya* refer to previous ordinations (pp.187c21–188a1).

In the Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya* (T.1425, p.413b25–29) each male candidate is asked whether he has ever received full ordination. If he answers in the affirmative, he is asked whether he ever violated a *pārājika* rule. If he did, re-ordination is not permitted. If he declares that he did not, he is questioned about the thirteen *saṃghāvaśeṣa* offenses. If he admits to committing one of these offenses, it has to be ascertained whether the case can be handled in accordance with the rules. Finally, the candidate is asked whether he renounced the training (*she jie*) before committing the offense. The only acceptable answer is “yes,” but it is unclear whether this question is linked specifically to the first *pārājika* rule, which sanctions sexual intercourse, or whether it can be extended to other circumstances in which an ordained monk may—or should—renounce the training. The Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya* (p.413b23) also asks if male candidates have ever joined another—non-Buddhist—sect.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, this *vinaya* is unusually inquisitive with respect to female candidates: it asks each prospective

<sup>60</sup> The former Buddhist monk had once given up the Buddhist teaching (*ba dao* 罷道) and had joined a non-Buddhist ascetic sect, but now he wants to return to the Buddhist *saṃgha*. The monks are unsure and ask the Buddha for advice. The Buddha replies: “This non-Buddhist ascetic has abandoned the Buddhist teaching (lit. the inner teaching, *nei fa* 內法). He (should) not live in my community (lit. teaching, *fa* 法). One should not give him the going forth and the ordination.” Similar questions are asked in the Mahīśāsaka *karmavācanā* text, T.1424, p.217b8–9.

<sup>61</sup> “Are you not a *yue ji ren* 越濟人 [‘one who has gone over’]?” (Pāli *ūr̥thikā-pakrāntikā*; cf. Roth, *Bhikṣuṇī Vinaya*, 33). This presumably refers to someone who was a Buddhist and then joined a non-Buddhist ascetic group.

*bhikṣuṇī* if she has previously left the *saṃgha* to join a non-Buddhist sect (p.472b3–4) and also if she has been ordained in the past (p.472b4–5). If she answers “yes” to either question, she must be told: “Go, you cannot receive ordination.”<sup>62</sup>

In the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya* (T.1435, p.156a11–12) each male candidate is asked whether he was a fully ordained monk in the past. If he answers that he was, his pure conduct must be verified; if he renounced the training, it must be ascertained whether this was done in accordance with the rules. By contrast, female candidates are not questioned on any earlier ordinations (p.332b7–23). However, as Sujato (*Bhikkhuni Vinaya Studies*, 127, and note 39) notes, the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya* (p.291a10–16) includes a story of *bhikṣuṇīs* who return to lay life, whereupon the whole lay community, and especially their in-laws, accuse them of vacillation. Therefore, the Buddha declares that any nuns who abandon the teaching (*fan jie* 反戒) may not go forth again or be re-ordained.<sup>63</sup>

In the Mūlasarvāstivāda school (T.1453, *Genbenshuoyiqieyou bu bai yi jiemo* 根本說一切有部百一羯磨, *One Hundred and One Formal Acts of the Mūlasarvāstivāda School*, p.457b2–3) each male candidate is asked two questions about his possible adherence to a non-Buddhist sect: are you a non-Buddhist ascetic; and have you gone to a non-Buddhist group? In a note, the translator, the monk Yijing 義淨, explains that the first question concerns the candidate’s status at the time of the ordination ceremony: are you *at this moment* a non-Buddhist ascetic?<sup>64</sup> The second seeks to determine whether the candidate was a Buddhist, then a non-Buddhist ascetic, and now wants to rejoin the *saṃgha*. This is not allowed. With respect to previous ordination, the candidate is asked if he has ever gone

<sup>62</sup> This is parallel to the Mahāsāṃghika–Lokottaravāda text; see Roth, *Bhikṣuṇī Vinaya*, 31–35, §§35–37; Nolot, *Règles de discipline des nonnes bouddhistes*, 20–22.

<sup>63</sup> The Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*, T.1435, p.377c15–18 issues a similar proscription, but makes an exception for women who return to lay life, undergo a sex change and become men: they may be re-ordained. Every *vinaya* tradition discusses sex change, albeit not in the case of re-ordination of nuns. For a discussion in the Pāli tradition, see Petra Kieffer-Pütz, “Ehe- oder Lebensjahre? Die Altersangabe für eine “verheira-tete” Frau (*gihigatā*) in den Rechtstexten der Theravādin,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 155.1 (2005): 228–229. Since sex change lies beyond the scope of the present research, I shall not discuss it further.

<sup>64</sup> This question may be relevant in order to determine whether the applicant has to undergo a four-month waiting period to his ordination or not (see also note 58).

forth; if he committed a *pārājika* offense at that time (which would disqualify him from re-ordination); and, if he returned to lay life, whether he did so in accordance with the rules (T.1453, p.457b7–10).<sup>65</sup> Female candidates are asked identical questions on their membership of non-Buddhist sects (T.1453, p.461c27–28). However, in a marked contrast to the male candidates, any female candidate who went forth in the past is automatically disqualified from re-ordination. Women who have returned to lay life cannot go forth again (T.1453, p.462a3–4). This is confirmed by a passage in T.1451, *Kṣudrakavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya*,<sup>66</sup> in which lay people criticize a woman for changing her mind: she went forth, returned to lay life, then wanted to go forth again. This is not allowed—a nun who has returned to lay life cannot go forth (*chu jia* 出家) again—because people laugh at indecision, so such behavior harms the Dharma (pp.352b2–20).<sup>67</sup>

#### 2.4 Concluding remarks

In conclusion, we can say that the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* permits monks to make a formal renouncement of the training (*she jie*). Although the text is rather vague on precisely when a monk may undertake this procedure, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that he may formally leave the *saṃgha* for a variety of reasons. The Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* further clari-

<sup>65</sup> Similar questions are asked in a presumably Mūlasarvāstivāda *karmavācanā* Sanskrit text. See Herbert Härtel, *Karmavācanā. Formulare für den Gebrauch im buddhistischen Gemeindeleben aus ostturkistanischen Sanskrit-Handschriften*. Sanskrittexte aus den Turfanfunden, 3 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1956), 79–80.

<sup>66</sup> On this text, see Clarke, “Vinayas,” 76. This is similar in a Sanskrit Mūlasarvāstivāda text for *bhikṣuṇīs* that is commonly classified as a *karmavācanā* text; cf. Michael Schmidt, “Bhikṣuṇī-Karmavācanā: Die Handschrift Sansk. c 25 (R) der Bodleian Library Oxford,” in *Studien zur Indologie und Buddhismuskunde. Festgabe des Seminars für Indologie und Buddhismuskunde für Professor Dr. Heinz Bechert*, ed. Reinhold Grünendahl et al. Indica et Tibetica, 22 (Bonn: Indica et Tibetica Verlag, 1993), 253. However, Jin-Il Chung (“Bhikṣuṇī-Karmavācanā of the Mūlasarvāstivādins,” in *Facets of Indian Culture: Gustav Roth Felicitation Volume, Published on the Occasion of His 82nd Birthday*, ed. Chitta Ranjan Prasad Sinha (Patna: Bihar Puravid Parishad, 1998), 420–421) argues that there is sufficient evidence to assign this Sanskrit text to the *Kṣudrakavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya* rather than a *karmavācanā* collection.

<sup>67</sup> A similar prohibition is issued in T.1451, p.358c1–3.

fies that any monk who has renounced the training in the correct manner has the option of returning to the Buddhist community and requesting full re-ordination. In contrast, the text does not mention nuns' formal renouncement of the training, so the inference is that formal withdrawal from the *saṃgha* is not an option for women. However, the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* does acknowledge that both monks and nuns may leave the *saṃgha* informally (*xiu dao*). Some parallel passages indicate that the editor(s) of the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* understood the difference between formal and informal withdrawal, although other passages suggest that the formal withdrawal procedure may have been a later development. Either way, the *vinaya* includes many references to monks who either leave the *saṃgha* informally or simply walk away. Equally, it provides some information on monks who wish to return to the community. This is permitted as long as certain criteria are met, with monks seemingly allowed to rejoin the *saṃgha* in whichever position they occupied when they left (although no explicit guidelines on seniority are provided on this issue). So, for instance, if a monk were suspended at the time when he left, that suspension will continue when he rejoins. Thereafter, he is allowed to follow the standard reinstatement procedure and resume his life as a full member of the *saṃgha*. Furthermore, the questions that are asked prior to re-ordination indicate that some former monks—those who have committed a *pārājika* offense; and those who have been unfaithful to both Buddhist and non-Buddhist communities—are not allowed to return to the *saṃgha*.

The Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* does not provide any advice on how former nuns may return to the Buddhist monastic community once they have left. Moreover, the questions asked prior to the ordination ceremony for prospective *bhikṣuṇīs* do not make any reference to former monastic life. The only exception appears in a *karmavācanā* text for nuns, probably compiled in China on the basis of a *karmavācanā* text for monks. It asks prospective nuns if they have ever committed a *pārājika* offense, and whether they have been unfaithful to Buddhist and non-Buddhist communities. It has nothing more to say about re-ordination. This vagueness allows for speculation that nuns may have enjoyed the same rights as monks, at least in the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*.

However, it is questionable whether the influential Chinese *vinaya* master Daoxuan shared this view. As discussed above, he states that other *vinayas* may be consulted when the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* provides

insufficient detail, and at least two of the *vinayas* that were available in China at the time (the Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya* and the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*) are unequivocal on this issue: former nuns cannot be re-ordained.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, in the next section, we focus on Daoxuan’s commentaries and explore what he had to say about withdrawal and re-ordination.

### 3. Daoxuan’s commentaries

Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667 CE) is one of the most famous Chinese *vinaya* masters, and his commentaries have become standard guidelines in Chinese monasticism, so his opinions are highly pertinent to this research. One of his most noted commentaries is the *Sifen lü shanfan buque xingshi chao* 四分律刪繁補闕行事鈔, *An Abridged and Explanatory Commentary on the Dharmaguptaka vinaya* (T.1804), in which he discusses the *prātimokṣa* rules for monks and nuns. As the title suggests, this text is primarily an analysis of the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, but it also contains references to and interpretations of many other—mainly *vinaya*—texts.

Daoxuan discusses issues relating to the renouncement of the training (*she jie*) in some depth in the *Sifen lü shanfan buque xingshi chao*, focusing specifically on the questions that are posed to candidates for ordination.<sup>69</sup> Three of these questions are particularly relevant for the subject under discussion in this paper. First, there is the relatively simple question that inquires into *pārājika* offenses (T.1804, p.26c20–23). In accordance with all of the *vinayas*, Daoxuan explains that anyone who has committed such an offense cannot return to the Buddhist monastic community. This prohibition includes any former monastic who formally renounced the training (*she jie*) after committing a *pārājika* offense.

The second question relates to entering the community with a *zui xin* 賊心 (“stealthy mind”)—that is, without properly deserving it. This impediment to becoming a full member of the monastic community is

<sup>68</sup> The Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition similarly debars former nuns from re-ordination, but the *vinaya* of that school was not available in Chinese in Daoxuan’s lifetime.

<sup>69</sup> In the Chinese context, one is traditionally expected to take a permanent ordination. Still, Daoxuan discusses in detail the *vinaya* regulations on withdrawal and re-ordination. It is unclear to which extent this might have been put into practice.

mentioned in the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, although not in reference to the re-ordination procedure (T.1428, p.814c13–14). Nevertheless, Daoxuan (T.1804, p.27a11–b7) enumerates many cases that he believes fall under this concept, and, interestingly, also discusses the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*'s view on the re-ordination of nuns who have previously renounced the training: “The *Shisong* [lū] (Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*) says: ‘If a *bhikṣuṇī* renounces the training (*she jie* 捨戒) in accordance with the rules, and then again receives ordination, she does not obtain it.’ This is called the impediment (*nan* 難) of the stealthy mind” (十誦云。比丘尼如法捨戒若更受者不得。即名賊住難; T.1804, p.27b6–7). As discussed above, the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* has nothing to say on the re-ordination of nuns, so Daoxuan turns to the Sarvāstivāda tradition for missing—but important—information, then adds this information to his explanation of the impediment of the stealthy mind. In this way, he not only clarifies the Dharmaguptaka school's perspective, but subtly inserts extra details into the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*.

The third question relates to membership of a non-Buddhist sect. Here, Daoxuan neatly encapsulates the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*'s opinion: any candidate who has been unfaithful to a Buddhist and a non-Buddhist community cannot be re-ordained (T.1804, p.27b7–14).

At the very end of the chapter on impediments, Daoxuan returns to the issue of renouncement of the training (*she jie*; T.1804, p.30c12–19). He explains that the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* allows unhappy monastics to renounce their training and return to their families. Moreover, if they subsequently wish to rejoin the Buddhist *saṅgha*, they may do so. However, Daoxuan emphasizes that only monks may follow this course of action, and that they may do so no more than seven times. He arrives at this figure by referring to the *Zeng yi ahan jing* 增一阿含經, *Ekottarā-gama* (T.125), a text that was translated into Chinese at the end of the fourth century. The *Zeng yi ahan jing* (T.125, p.702c11–12) declares: “From now on, one can enter the [Buddhist] monastic order (*zuo dao* 作道) seven times. If one goes beyond this limit, it is against the rules.” Daoxuan believes this passage gives monks permission to renounce their training seven times.

With respect to nuns, Daoxuan again refers to the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*, and to the *Sapoduo bu pini modeleqie* 薩婆多部毘尼摩得勒伽, *Sarvāstivāda* [\**nikāya*?] *Vinaya*\**māṭṛkā* (T.1441), to argue that former

*bhikṣuṇīs* cannot be re-ordained.<sup>70</sup> The *Sapoduo bu pini modeleqie*, which is ascribed to Saṃghavarman, is said to have been translated into Chinese in 435. It is often linked to the Sarvāstivāda school, but Shayne Clarke has shown that it is more closely affiliated with the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya*.<sup>71</sup> In an echo of the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*, it does not allow a nun who has renounced the training to be re-ordained, unless she has become a man in the interim (T.1441, p.569a16–19). Daoxuan does not discuss the possibility of a sex change, but he stresses that the ban on female re-ordination is the correct monastic standard. He then clarifies why withdrawal is allowed, even though re-ordination is not (T.1804, p.30c16–17). In this section he again turns to another tradition for his information, since the Dharmaguptaka school does not mention nuns' withdrawal from the *saṃgha* (or at least not formal withdrawal). By contrast, according to Daoxuan, the Sarvāstivāda school permits it so that nuns may avoid committing a *pārājika* offense. Furthermore, he explains that this procedure allows women to come and go “without barriers” (*wu zhang* 無障). This notion makes sense, since nuns who are not allowed to withdraw could technically be viewed as permanent members of the monastic community. They could thus easily violate the *pārājika* rule on sexual intercourse on their return to family life. In explanation of the different rules for men and women, Daoxuan (p.30c17–19) states:

*Bhikṣus* firmly establish themselves [in the monastic community], which is very beneficial. Therefore, they are allowed to return seven times. But for nuns, [renouncing the training] is beneficial in only one sense: it ensures that they can lead a lay life without fault, so that they will not give rise to any blame and shame.<sup>72</sup> This is generally what that school<sup>73</sup> says (accordingly, [a

<sup>70</sup> Another *vinaya* master, Huaisu 懷素 (c. 634–697 CE), also refers to the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya* in a passage on the re-ordination for nuns. He explains that nuns who renounce the training are viewed as defiled, and therefore should not be re-ordained (cf. *Sifen lü kaizong ji* 四分律開宗記, *Introduction to the Teachings of the Dharmaguptaka vinaya*, W, Vol. 66, pp.910b13–911a3; for a brief discussion, see also Sujato, *Bhikkhuni Vinaya Studies*, 128).

<sup>71</sup> On this text, see Clarke, “Vinayas,” 80–81.

<sup>72</sup> Literally “errors” (*guo shi* 過失).

<sup>73</sup> This is certainly a reference to the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*'s view that vacillating women are subject to lay criticism, as discussed earlier.

*bhikṣuṇī* who has renounced the training] should become a member of the two lower sections of the *saṃgha*).<sup>74</sup>

In his commentary on the rules for monks (*Sifen lü biqiu hanzhu jieben* 四分律比丘含注戒本, *A Bhikṣuprātimokṣa of the Dharmaguptaka vinaya with Commentary*; T.1806), Daoxuan concisely reiterates the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*'s guidance on the first *pārājika* rule, without adding any opinions of his own (T.1806, pp.430c25–431a7). Similarly, in a brief discussion on the questions that male candidates for ordination should be asked (*Sifen lü shanbu sui ji jiemo* 四分律刪補隨機羯磨, *An Abridged and Explanatory Karmavācanā of the Dharmaguptaka vinaya*; T.1808, p.497b2–22), he merely repeats the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*'s stipulations. More interesting is his *Sifen lü biqiuni chao* 四分律比丘尼鈔, *Commentary on the [Part for] Bhikṣuṇīs of the Dharmaguptaka vinaya* (W, Vol. 64, pp.50–192). In this commentary Daoxuan argues that nuns can renounce the training and choose to become a novice, a Buddhist lay woman, or indeed a common lay woman (pp.81b17–82a2). Later (p.82a4–6), he again refers to the *Zeng yi ahan jing* to explain that monks may renounce the training up to seven times. However, he then stresses that no text allows women to return to the *saṃgha* after renouncement of the training. Daoxuan's explanation of this apparent inconsistency (p.82a6–11) is unequivocal:

[T]he mind of women is weak, and they are not capable of promoting the Buddhist path. They were not allowed [to enter the monastic order] in the first place,<sup>75</sup> so how could it be acceptable suddenly to allow them to be re-ordained? Nowadays, many *bhikṣuṇīs* do not engage in study, they are confused about their goal and interests, and they practice meditation in a foolish way. One says that offerings given by devotees require an earnest effort to repay [literally “are hard to digest”]. Led by evil people, they are convinced to renounce the training. *Bhikṣus* are given the opportunity to return. On

<sup>74</sup> The final subclause is an addition by Daoxuan himself. Technically, the *saṃgha* can be divided into either five or (if lay followers are included) seven sections: monks, nuns, probationers, male and female novices, and (if seven sections), male and female lay followers. It is unclear what Daoxuan means by “the two lower sections,” but if we compare this passage with the *Commentary on the [Part for] Bhikṣuṇīs of the Dharmaguptaka vinaya* (see below), he is probably referring to female novices and lay followers, rather than female probationers and novices.

<sup>75</sup> This is probably a reference to the initial refusal to ordain the Buddha's step-mother, Mahāprajāpatī, traditionally seen as the first Buddhist nun.



*bhikṣuṇīs*, it is said that they can renounce [the training] once, but they cannot return. Innocently, they have fallen down and they have let the great benefit slip away. Therefore the [Dharmaguptaka] *vinaya* says: “Those who renounce the training are considered dead in the Buddhist Dharma.” Due to their lack of understanding, they have fallen into the “dark lay status” (*hun su* 昏俗). Whenever I speak of such incidents, I feel truly hurt.

From this passage, it is clear that Daoxuan does not hold women in particularly high esteem.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, he is quite antipathetic toward monastics who renounce the training. He pities them as people who have been led astray by evil influences, are unable to withstand temptation, and fail to live up to the expectations of lay devotees. Daoxuan supports this harsh opinion by referring to the introductory stanza of the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, which declares: “those who renounce the training are considered dead in the Buddhist Dharma” (若有捨戒者於佛法為死, T.1428, p.568b21).<sup>77</sup>

#### 4. Some notes on contemporary China

Finally, it is worth exploring the opinions of some leading contemporary masters. Although a detailed investigation is beyond the scope of this paper, a brief overview reveals that Daoxuan’s opinions remain highly influential among today’s monastic masters. This is certainly true in the work of Sheng Yen (1930–2009), the founder of the Fagushan Monastery and one of Taiwan’s most eminent *vinaya* teachers. In his book on *vinaya* rules he pleads for respect for monks and nuns who return to lay life; and, in that context, discusses the possibility of re-ordination into the Buddhist

<sup>76</sup> On Daoxuan’s opinion of nuns, see also Ann Heirman, “Buddhist Nuns through the Eyes of Leading Early Tang Masters,” *Chinese Historical Review* 22.1 (2015): 31–51.

<sup>77</sup> Interestingly, in a commentary (p.568c3), the Taishō edition adds: “this stanza does not belong to the *vinaya* recited [by Upāli] at the gathering of one thousand monks led by Mahākāśyapa [a reference to the First Buddhist Council, traditionally said to have been held immediately after the Buddha’s demise]. It has been made by someone.” In this sense, the opinion on renouncement of the training does not necessarily correspond exactly to what is said in the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*. Many thanks to Shi Fa Ling (Ghent University) for this insight.

*saṃgha*.<sup>78</sup> He does not refer explicitly to Daoxuan, but follows his predecessor's methodology: he searches for guidance in all of the *vinayas* that discuss re-ordination because the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* (the standard Chinese *vinaya*) provides insufficient information. With respect to monks, he states that there are two contrasting opinions on how often they may withdraw and seek re-ordination: either three or seven times. Unfortunately, he does not provide any sources for either perspective. As we saw above, Daoxuan and others favor the latter, while the former is rarely discussed as an option (I could not identify any source). Nevertheless, Sheng Yen clearly prefers a maximum of three re-ordinations.

As far as nuns are concerned, he relies on the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya* (T.1435) and the *Genbenshuoyiqieyou bu pinaiye za shi* 根本說一切有部毗奈耶雜事, *Kṣudrakavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya* (T.1451) for his information. As discussed above, both of these texts insist that nuns may renounce the training only once and that they may not be re-ordained. Sheng Yen attempts to explain this discrepancy by arguing that women are stronger in the face of difficulties and have a greater sense of shame. Moreover, he adds that men usually take the leading role in cases of illicit sexual intercourse. Hence, *bhikṣus* are allowed to renounce the training three times, whereas *bhikṣuṇīs* may do so only once, unless they undergo a sex change. However, Sheng Yen explains that sex changes are so rare that they need not be discussed any further. He concludes that *bhikṣuṇīs* should always enter the monastic order with good intentions as this will minimize the likelihood of their subsequent withdrawal. This is a rather confusing conclusion, especially as he allows men to renounce their training (and rejoin the *saṃgha*) not once but three times. It seems that Sheng Yen believes there is no need to allow women to withdraw from and rejoin the community because they are naturally strong and susceptible to shame, whereas men are relatively weak and lack shame, so they must be given a number of opportunities to leave and then return to the *saṃgha*.

The master Wu Yin (born 1940), the abbess of Luminary Nunnery in Taiwan, who is well known for her research into the *vinayas'* guidelines for female monastics, agrees that monks may be ordained several times, whereas nuns who have renounced the training may not rejoin the *saṃgha*. She admits that she is unsure why there are different rules for men and

---

<sup>78</sup> Sheng Yen Shih 聖嚴釋, *Lǜzhì shēnghuó* 律制生活 (Vinaya and Daily Life) (Taipei: Dharma Drum Publishing Corp., 2007 [1963]), 61–64.

women with respect to re-ordination, but hypothesizes that “it could be because the sangha relies on the leadership of the bhikshus.”<sup>79</sup> She also insists that nuns must maintain proper conduct because they are responsible for teaching younger members of the community. Interestingly, she adds that in the Chinese tradition, female novices who have renounced their vow may be re-ordained as long as they have not violated a *pārājika* rule, although this is a rare occurrence.

## 5. Conclusion

The Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* explicitly allows monks to withdraw from the monastic community either formally or informally, and also acknowledges that nuns sometimes withdraw. However, in contrast to other *vinayas*, it does not outline any formal procedure through which female monastics may leave the *samgha*. Similarly, when discussing the re-ordination of former monastics, the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* unequivocally welcomes former monks, irrespective of whether they withdrew formally or informally. However, it offers no guidance on how nuns may rejoin the *samgha*. This leaves room to hypothesize that the compilers of the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* assumed that nuns should have the same opportunities for re-ordination as monks. On the other hand, the strict rules on formal withdrawal rather point in the opposite direction. One might even speculate that the compilers of the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* did not even consider the re-ordination of nuns as a viable possibility. Certainly, that is the view of the Chinese *vinaya* master Daoxuan, who supports his conclusion by marshaling information from other *vinaya* texts in order to resolve the lacunae in the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*. Specifically, he refers to the Sarvāstivāda school’s stipulation that former nuns should not be re-ordained. He also reveals his general aversion to female monastics by stating that women weaken the Dharma and are unable to promote the Buddhist path. Although this prejudice against *bhikṣuṇīs* is not shared by contemporary Buddhist masters, Daoxuan’s clarification of the

---

<sup>79</sup> Wu Yin, *Choosing Simplicity: Commentary on the Bhikshuni Pratimoksha*. Trans. Bhikshuni Jendy Shih; ed. Bhikshuni Thubten Chodron (New York: Snow Lion Publications, 2001), 144–145.

Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* remains standard: former nuns cannot be re-ordained.

### Acknowledgments

My sincere thanks go to Dr. Petra Kieffer-Pülz (Academy of Sciences and Literature, Mainz, Germany), to Shi Fa Ling (Ph.D. student, Ghent University, Belgium) and to an anonymous reader for their meticulous reading of this paper and for their suggestions and corrections. All mistakes remain mine.

### Abbreviations

- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經. 85 vols. Ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1934.
- Vin *The Vinaya Piṭakam*. Ed. Hermann Oldenberg. London: Williams & Norgate, 1879–1883.
- W *Wan xuzang jing* 卍續藏經. 150 vols. Ed. Xinwenfeng Bianshenbu 新文豐編審部. Taipei: Xinwenfeng Chuban, 1975.

### References

- Anālayo, Bhikkhu. “Pārājika.” In *Vinaya Studies* (Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts Research Series, 7), edited by Bhikkhu Anālayo. 7–33. Taipei: Dharma Drum Publishing Co., 2017.
- Chung, Jin-il. “Bhikṣuṇī–Karmavācanā of the Mūlasarvāstivādins.” In *Facets of Indian Culture: Gustav Roth Felicitation Volume, Published on the Occasion of His 82nd Birthday*, ed. Chitta Ranjan Prasad Sinha, 420–423. Patna: Bihar Puravid Parishad, 1998.
- Ciyi 慈怡, ed. *Foguang da cidian* 佛光大辭典. Seven vols. Gaoxiong: Foguang Chubanshe; reprint, Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 1989.
- Clarke, Shayne. “The Existence of the Supposedly Non-existent *Śikṣādattā–śrāmaṇerī*: A New Perspective on *Pārājika* Penance.” *Buddhist Studies* [*Bukkyō kenkyū* 佛教研究], 29 (2000): 149–176.

- Clarke, Shayne. “Monks Who Have Sex: *Pārājika* Penance in Indian Buddhist Monasticism.” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 37.1 (2009): 1–43.
- Clarke, Shayne. *Family Matters in Indian Buddhist Monasticisms*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2014.
- Clarke, Shayne. “Vinayas.” In *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, Vol. 1, *Literatures and Languages*, ed. Jonathan A. Silk, 60–87. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015.
- Fa Ling Shi and Heirman, Ann. “Fighting Fu Yi: Daoxuan and His Defence of Buddhism in the Social and Political Context of the Early Tang Period.” Forthcoming.
- Funayama, Tōru. “The Acceptance of Buddhist Precepts by the Chinese in the Fifth Century.” *Journal of Asian History* 38.2 (2004): 97–119.
- Greene, Eric. “Atonement of *Pārājika* Transgressions in Fifth-Century Chinese Buddhism.” In *Rules of Engagement: Medieval Traditions of Buddhist Monastic Regulation*, ed. Susan Andrews, Jinhua Chen, and Cuilan Liu. Hamburg Buddhist Studies, 7. 369–408. Bochum: Projekt Verlag, 2017.
- Härtel, Herbert. *Karmavācanā. Formulare für den Gebrauch im buddhistischen Gemeindeleben aus ostturkistanischen Sanskrit-Handschriften. Sanskrittexte aus den Turfanfunden*, 3. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1956.
- Heirman, Ann. “Can We Trace the Early Dharmaguptakas?” *T’oung Pao* 88 (2002): 419–423.
- Heirman, Ann. *‘The Discipline in Four Parts’: Rules for Nuns According to the Dharmaguptakavinaya*. Three parts. Buddhist Tradition Series, Vols. 47–49. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2002.
- Heirman, Ann. “Vinaya from India to China.” In *The Spread of Buddhism*, ed. Ann Heirman and Stephan-Peter Bumbacher, 167–202. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Heirman, Ann. “Buddhist Nuns through the Eyes of Leading Early Tang Masters.” *Chinese Historical Review* 22.1 (2015): 31–51.
- Hirakawa, Akira 平川彰. *Ritsuzō no Kenkyū 律藏の研究 (A Study of the Vinaya-Piṭaka)*. Tokyo: Sankibō Busshorin, 1970.
- Hirakawa, Akira (in collaboration with Ikuno, Zenno and Groner, Paul). *Monastic Discipline for the Buddhist Nuns: An English Translation of the Chinese Text of the Mahāsāṃghika-Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya*. Patna: Kashi Jayaswal Research Institute, 1982.

- Hüsken, Ute. "The Application of the *Vinaya* Term *Nāsanā*." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 20.2 (1997): 93–111.
- Kieffer-Pülz, Petra. "Ehe- oder Lebensjahre? Die Altersangabe für eine "verheiratete" Frau (*gihigatā*) in den Rechtstexten der Theravādin." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 155.1 (2005): 199–238.
- Kieffer-Pülz, Petra. "Stretching the *Vinaya* Rules and Getting Away with It." *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 29 (2007): 1–49.
- Kieffer-Pülz, Petra. *Verlorene Gaṇṭhipadas zum buddhistischen Ordensrecht. Untersuchungen zu den in der Vajirabuddhiṭkā zitierten Kommentaren Dhammasiris und Vajirabuddhis*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013.
- Kieffer-Pülz, Petra. "Re-Ordination of Former Buddhist Nuns in the Theravāda Tradition." *Buddhism, Law and Society* 1 (2015–2016): 1–32.
- Nolot, Édith. *Règles de discipline des nonnes bouddhistes, le bhikṣuṇīvinaya de l'école Mahāsāṃghika–Lokottaravādin*. Paris: Collège de France, 1991.
- Nolot, Édith. "Studies in *Vinaya* Technical Terms IV–X." *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 25 (1999): 1–111.
- Norman, K.R. and Pruitt, William (ed. and trans.). *The Pātimokkha*. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2001.
- Roth, Gustav. *Bhikṣuṇī–Vinaya, Including Bhikṣuṇī–Prakīrṇaka and a Summary of the Bhikṣu–Prakīrṇaka of the Ārya–Mahāsāṃghika–Lokottaravādin*. Patna: Kashi Jayaswal Research Institute, 1970.
- Schmidt, Michael. "Bhikṣuṇī–Karmavācānā: Die Handschrift Sansk. c 25 (R) der Bodleian Library Oxford." In *Studien zur Indologie und Buddhismuskunde. Festgabe des Seminars für Indologie und Buddhismuskunde für Professor Dr. Heinz Bechert*, ed. Reinhold Grünendahl et al. Indica et Tibetica, 22. Bonn: Indica et Tibetica Verlag, 1993.
- Sheng Yen Shih 聖嚴釋. *Lüzhi shenghuo 律制生活* (Vinaya and Daily Life). Taipei: Dharma Drum Publishing Corp., 2007 [1963].
- Sujato, Bhikkhu. *Bhikkhuni Vinaya Studies. Research and Reflections on Monastic Discipline for Buddhist Nuns*. Australia: Santipada Publications, 2009. [http://www.thaibuddhism.net/pdf/Bhikkhuni\\_Vinaya\\_Studies5.1.pdf](http://www.thaibuddhism.net/pdf/Bhikkhuni_Vinaya_Studies5.1.pdf); last accessed 12.11.2016.

- Tang Yongtong, *Han Wei Liang–Jin Nanbeichao Fojiaoshi* 漢魏兩晉南北朝佛教史 (History of Buddhism of the Period of Han, Wei, Two Jin and the Southern and Northern Dynasties). Vol. 2. Banqiao: Luotuo Chubanshe, 1996 [1938].
- von Simson, Georg, Schmidt, Michael, Hartmann, Jens–Uwe, and Dietz, Siglinde (eds.). *Sanskrit–Wörterbuch der buddhistischen Texte aus den Turfan–Funden und der kanonischen Literatur der Sarvāstivāda–Schule*. Vol. 1. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994.
- Wu Yin. *Choosing Simplicity: Commentary on the Bhikshuni Pratimoksha*. Trans. Bhikshuni Jendy Shih; ed. Bhikshuni Thubten Chodron. New York: Snow Lion Publications, 2001.