



Institute for Advanced
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A RE-EXAMINATION OF THE FORMATION OF THE VINAYA MĀTRKĀ AND THE SKANDHAKA SECTION: KARMAVĀCANĀ LISTS IN THE VINAYA MĀTRKĀ

CHEN YINGJIN

*(Associate Professor, Beijing Language and Culture University;
Visiting Scholar, Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, The University of Tokyo)*

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Chen Yingjin, female, holds a Doctor of Literature degree and serves as an Associate Professor at College of Sinology and Chinese Studies of Beijing Language and Culture University. Her research focuses on Buddhist linguistics and literature, Buddhist vinaya literature, and overseas Chinese religious studies. She has presided over a general project of the National Social Science Fund of China, “A Study on the Khandhaka Section of the Buddhist Vinaya Pitaka and the Sectarian Monastic System”, and a general project of the Ministry of Education's Post-Doctoral Program, “A Study on Literary Styles in the Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, and Chinese Buddhist Vinaya Pitakas”. She has published more than ten academic papers in journals such as World Religious Cultures, Studies in Ancient Chinese, Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies, and Religions. For many years, she has translated and published numerous academic works by Japanese scholars into Chinese, including Studies on the Vinaya Piṭaka by Akira Hirakawa, A Historical Study of the Formation of Early Buddhist Scriptures by Maeda Egaku, and Orthodoxy and Heresy in Buddhism: The Emergence of the Pāli Cosmopolis by Norihisa Baba.

Abstract:

A longstanding puzzle in Vinaya scholarship concerns the textual transmission of sectarian Vinayas discovered to date. With the sole exception of the Mahāsāṅghikavinaya (Mohesengqi-lü; 摩訶僧祇律; T. 1425), all other extant sectarian Vinayas exhibit broadly similar structural arrangements in their Skandhaka sections. This phenomenon has long been attributed to divergent codifications of the Skandhaka section undertaken separately by the Mahāsāṅghikas and Sthaviras following the Fundamental Schism. Yet an important question remains unresolved: can both recensions be traced back to a single more archaic prototype?

Previous comparative studies of Vinaya texts have generally posited the existence of a so-called “Primitive Vinaya Piṭaka” predating the Fundamental Schism, implying that both the Sthavira and Mahāsāṅghika lineages inherited structural frameworks derived from this primitive corpus. Erich Frauwallner argued for the antiquity of the Mahāsāṅghikavinaya, while Akira Hirakawa arrived at the conclusion that the Pāli Vinaya represents an earlier stratum through close analysis of the Upasampadā-skandhaka; conversely, Yin Shun maintained that the unstructured Mingzasong baqufa (明雜誦跋渠法) and Weiyifa (威儀法) preserved in the Mahāsāṅghikavinaya embody the most archaic prototype of the Skandhaka section.

In recent years, Shanye Clarke’s research on Vinaya Mātṛkā (2004) has further corroborated an observation first raised by Yin Shun: substantial parallels exist between the Mātṛkā materials preserved in the Shisong-lü (十誦律; T. 1435), the Pinimujing (毘尼母經; T. 1463), the Sapoduobu pini modeleqie (薩婆多部毘尼摩得勒伽; Vinaya *mātṛkā; T. 1441), the Uttaragrantha of Mūlasarvāstivādin, and the recitational frameworks of the Mahāsāṅghika tradition. This evidence reinforces Yin Shun’s hypothesis regarding the genesis of the Skandhaka section, namely that the Skandhaka corpus evolved secondarily out of the earlier Mātṛkā materials.

Building upon this scholarly foundation, This lecture re-examines the formation and sectarian transformations of Skandhaka structural systems across different Buddhist schools, by elaborating on two lines of evidence: the consistent textual congruence between Mātṛkā materials and the Mahāsāṅghikavinaya, and the inherent logical architecture of the catalogues contained within the Mātṛkā. This lecture argues that the textual corpus of the Mahāsāṅghikavinaya is organized around the framework of karmavācanās, a compositional logic equally evident in the Mātṛkā inventories. Subsequent conceptual shifts and categorical reclassifications of karmavācanā procedures prompted the Sthavira school to restructure and reorganize the Skandhaka section, yielding the Skandhaka framework attested in extant Sthavira-affiliated Vinaya texts.