Sleep well!

Sleeping Practices in Buddhist Disciplinary Rules

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Abstract

The present paper gives a detailed analysis of the guidelines on sleeping practices as stipulated in Buddhist monastic disciplinary texts and in Chinese manuals. It shows how sleep is perceived in normative texts, both in India and in China, and how monastics should deal with their daily need for sleep. The analysis reveals a striking contrast between sleep as a relatively innocent time when one’s actions incur no guilt, and sleep as a potentially harmful time of the day, given its association with disrespect, inactivity and sexual practices, and given the fact that during one’s sleep one might unwillingly display one’s true nature, which for some monastics appears to be quite detrimental.

Key words: vinaya, sleep, dream, Buddhist monastic discipline, Buddhist monks
Sleep well!

Sleeping Practices in Buddhist Disciplinary Rules

Since all human beings spend a lot of time asleep, it is no surprise that this aspect of life also constitutes an essential part of the daily concerns of Buddhist monks (bhikṣu) and nuns (bhikṣūṇī). This is also the case in first millennium China, where prominent masters such as Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) and Yijing 義 淨 (635–713) advise members of the monastic community on all kinds of aspects, including sleeping practices. Generally, their advice is closely in line with the so-called vinaya texts (texts on monastic discipline), compiled in India during and after the time of the Buddha, and spread to China in the first centuries of the Common Era. This paper aims to give a detailed analysis of guidelines on sleeping practices as stipulated in the vinaya texts and in the ensuing Chinese manuals. How is sleep perceived in monastic disciplinary texts and what does it entail? How should monastics deal with their daily need of sleep? Is there any shift between India and China?

Vinaya texts comment extensively on the so-called prātimokṣa (a list of rules to be recited every two weeks at the poṣadha ceremony\(^1\)), thus providing the reader with many explanatory details. In addition, the vinayas also give extra guidelines on all kinds of issues and legal procedures in chapters that are called skandhakas or vastus. In particular, in the chapter on lodging and furniture (Pāli senāsanakkhandhaka, Skt. śayanāsanavastu) extra data on sleeping practices can be found.\(^2\) The vinayas thus inform us about what an ideal monastic setting is supposed to look like. It is still hard to know, however, to what extent people

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\(^1\) A ceremony held every fortnight and attended by all monks/nuns of the monastery district (sīmā), so that the unity of the community is re-affirmed.

\(^2\) For a description, see Frauwallner, 1956, pp. 121–124.
actually observed all the rules given by disciplinary and thus normative texts. Nevertheless, the practices mentioned in these texts are at least imaginable and, as such, help us to understand how monastic life ideally should be.

Today, six vinayas are extant. Of these six, one is preserved in an Indian language—the Pāli vinaya. Although at the end of the fifth century a Pāli vinaya was translated into Chinese, the translation was never presented to the emperor and was subsequently lost.³ Five vinayas exist in their Chinese translation. Without doubt, the most active translation period was the beginning of the fifth century when four Chinese vinayas saw the light. In chronological order, these are: Shisong lü 十誦律 (T no. 1435, hereafter Sarvāstivādavinaya), Sifen lü 四分律 (T no. 1428, hereafter Dharmaguptakavinaya), Mohesengqi lü 摩訶僧祇律 (T no. 1425, hereafter Mahāsāṃghikavinaya), and Mishasai bu hexi wufen lü 彌沙塞部和醯五分律 (T no. 1421, hereafter Mahīśāsakavinaya). Much later, at the beginning of the eighth century, the bhikṣu Yijing 義淨 translated large parts of the Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya (T nos. 1442–1451),⁴ as well as other vinaya texts belonging to the same school. In the meantime, however, the Dharmaguptakavinaya had been strongly promoted by influential Buddhist masters, and around 705–710, it was even imposed by imperial decree as the only vinaya to be followed in the Chinese empire.⁵ The Dharmaguptakavinaya consequently became the reference point for monastic discipline in China. It is for this reason that the present research


⁴ Of the vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivāda, a Tibetan translation as well as a wealth of Sanskrit fragments are extant. For details, see Yuyama, 1979, pp. 12–33.

focuses on the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, while comparing it with the other *vinayas* where relevant.

### 1. Sleep and sleeping practices in *vinaya* guidelines

#### 1.1. How innocent are one’s dreams?

As pointed out by Peter Harvey: ‘the degree of unwholesomeness of an action is seen to vary according to the degree and nature of the volition/intention behind an action, and the degree of knowledge (of various kinds) relating to it. A bad action becomes more unwholesome as the force of volition behind it increases, for this leaves a greater karmic “trace” in the mind’. In this context, it seems logical that the *vinayas* all indicate that actions performed during one’s sleep, while dreaming, incur no guilt. To give one example: a monk who during his sleep insults another monk, does not commit any offence, since he does not have the intention to harm. The acquittal granted by the Buddha to a monk who is losing semen is also well known: when emitted in a dream, there is no offence. The *Dharmaguptakavinaya* explains that, during one’s sleep, the mind can be chaotic. Therefore, sleep can cause bad dreams, and one loses all protection of the gods. The mind is not focused on the doctrine, one cannot think clearly and one can lose semen. If, however, during one’s sleep the mind is at peace, this will not happen. Nevertheless, emitting semen during one’s sleep constitutes no offence. The *vinaya* thus indicates that, albeit losing semen is caused by a chaotic state of mind, it does not

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6 Harvey, 2000, p. 52.


9 T.1428: 579b24–29
involve any guilt. There is no volition or intention, and no knowledgeability. The agent is acting unwillingly. Consequently, the action does not constitute an offence.

As the above examples show, an agent cannot be held accountable if the action is without intention and/or knowledgeability. This is further corroborated by the fact that the Dharmaguptakavinaya compares offences committed when in a state of insanity to acts performed when dreaming. The agent is not responsible for his deeds, and his actions involve no guilt. Even more, a monk who has acted in a state of non compos mentis, but who has since regained his senses, can be granted a so-called bu chi pini 不癡毘尼 (amūdhavinaya), ‘a disciplinary procedure for one who is no (longer) insane’. This technical procedure means that actions done in a state of insanity will not be punished. One can never (again) raise them against the monk in question. The fact that he was mentally disturbed absolves him from all guilt, and frees the monk from any further questions. When putting insanity on a par with dreaming, the Dharmaguptakavinaya expresses that, while asleep, one is out of control of one’s acts and one is therefore not in any way guilty or legally liable.

Yet, is dreaming really as innocent as it seems to be? And, to remain within the scope of the present research on disciplinary rules, do normative texts never sanction offences committed during one’s sleep? While at first sight this seems not to be the case, some remarks hint at a different opinion, implying that dreams, or more generally actions committed during one’s sleep, are not as harmless as one might think. For example, although the above–mentioned rule on losing semen discharges the agent of any guilt, it still makes the difference between a chaotic mind and a peaceful one, and thus seems to point at some responsibility of the acting monk. Even if there is no intention or knowledgeability directly linked to the deed,

a chaotic mind might not just be there by chance. This even goes for arhats who are traditionally thought to have destroyed all passions and to be free of all impure influence.\textsuperscript{12} Yet, some Buddhist masters claim that arhats can still lose semen, and that, in this sense, their enlightenment is not fully perfect. This is at least what many authors of the Mahāsāṃghika School state, thus demoting arhats from their noble status.\textsuperscript{13} In the same context, it is equally claimed that dreams are invoked by such things as volition, conceptual identification or desire, thus implying that dreams are not at all disconnected from impurity. As such, according to the Mahāsāṃghikas, the Buddha does not sleep or dream, but is in a permanent state of meditation.\textsuperscript{14}

Be that as it may, being labelled as chaotic is never a positive status, even if one is not responsible. One more remark in the Dharmaguptakavinaya points to a similar line of reasoning: when a highly esteemed monk is falsely accused of a pārājika offence\textsuperscript{15} involving sexual contact with a woman, he says to Buddha in his defence: ‘Since I was born, not even in my dreams have I committed impurity. How could I do so when awake?’ Buddha acknowledges this.\textsuperscript{16} This statement seems to refer to some kind of gradation: While it is worse to commit an offence when being awake, in comparison with being asleep, an action done when dreaming is not completely harmless. With a truly pure mind one does not commit any offence, either when awake, or when asleep. An action committed during one’s sleep

\textsuperscript{12} Lamotte, 1974, pp. 91–92.

\textsuperscript{13} For details and references, see, among others, Nattier and Prebish, 1977, pp. 246–248, pp. 251–252; Cousins, 1991, pp. 40–43; and, more recently, Dessein, 2008.

\textsuperscript{14} See Dessein, 2008, p. 58.

\textsuperscript{15} Transgression of a pārājika offence leads to a permanent exclusion from the status of bhikṣu and bhikṣunī (cf. Heirman, 1999 and 2002a, part 1, pp. 119–124). On the possibility to still maintain a certain, though minor, position within the saṃgha, see Clarke, 2000.

\textsuperscript{16} T.1428: 588a17–20. A similar event is recorded on p.959a7–9.
might not incur any guilt, and does not need to be punished, but it still reveals something, namely a chaotic or impure mind. And there is even more: apart from revealing one’s mind, sleep or sleeping practices can further trigger some bad effects, as will be shown in the next section.

1.2. How telling are sleeping practices?

Generally speaking, vinaya rules do not perceive sleep in a very positive way. There are three major reasons for this negative perception. First of all, when asleep one loses control of oneself, which can lead to shameful situations. Secondly, sleep is opposed to activity and might therefore be seen as a sign of laziness. Finally, sleeping practices are easily related to sexual practices, clearly to be avoided in a monastic community.

a. Loss of control

Loss of control and the potentially ensuing damage to one’s image lie at the basis of the formulation of a rule forbidding monastics to pass the night together with persons who are not fully ordained:

**T.1428 (638c3-5):** ‘If a bhikṣu spends the night in the same room with a non-ordained man, he commits a pācittika when it comes to the third night.’

The introductory story relates how monks spend the night in the assembly hall of the monastery, together with lay people. One monk turns over in his sleep and, no longer covered, he shows his nakedness, without being aware of it. When he is laughed at by lay followers, he is ashamed. Thereupon, the Buddha lays down a precept saying that a monk

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who spends the night with one who is not ordained commits a *pācitti*ka.\(^\text{18}\) Later, monks observing this rule feel obliged to send away the young boy Rāhula, who has no place to spend the night. Eventually, Rāhula has to sleep near the toilets, where the Buddha finds him. Thereupon, the Buddha slightly changes his rule, allowing monks to share a few nights in the company of non-ordained people.\(^\text{19}\)

The above story clearly shows the importance of dignity and decorum for the monastic community. To live up to these expectations, a high level of consciousness and control is needed. Yet, when asleep, one cannot control one’s actions, and shameful situations cannot be avoided. Showing one’s nakedness is one of them. It provokes laughter and undermines the status of a monk.

### b. Laziness

Apart from considering the hours one is asleep as a period of the day over which one has no control, the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* is also conscious of the fact that one might equally perceive sleep as a sign of laziness, or at least lack of activity. This is obviously the case when, in the chapter on lodging and furniture, it is said that lay followers criticise monks who sleep during the daytime, arguing that monks who call themselves ‘awakened’ (*jue wu* 覺悟) should not sleep during the day.\(^\text{20}\) Thereupon, the Buddha stipulates that only monks who are old, or

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\(^\text{19}\) The other *vinayas* all have a parallel story: Pāli *vinaya*, *Vin* vol. 4, pp. 15–17; *Mahiśāsakavinaya*: T.1421: 40a7–b29; *Mahāsaṃghikavinaya*, T.1425: 365b3–366a20; *Sarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1435: 105b9–106a2; *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1442: 838c7–840b19. The number of nights slightly varies from one *vinaya* to the other. For details, see Heirman, 2002a, part 2, pp. 543–544, note 18.

sick, or who come from far away, can sleep during the daytime, albeit in closed rooms, so that no one can see them.

c. Sexual practices

Sleeping is also easily linked to sexual practices. In that context, the *vinayas* contain several rules trying to avoid any possible suspicion of improper behaviour:

T.1428 (638a6-7): ‘If a bhikṣu spends the night in the same room with a woman, he commits a pācittika.’

The introductory story relates how the honourable monk Anuruddha passes through a village that has no lodging especially assigned to monks.\(^{21}\) When he is looking for a place to sleep, he is referred to the house of a prostitute. The lady tries to seduce him several times, but Anuruddha does not even look at her. He is able to do so since he has achieved a very high level on the Buddhist path, namely *wu shang er ju jietuo* 無上二俱解脫, *anuttara ubhayatobhāgavimukta*, a deliverance by means of wisdom and concentration that allows him to be free of defilement and of obstacles on the way to deliverance.\(^{22}\) As a consequence, he equally possesses magic powers. Thereupon, the prostitute is very impressed. She is converted by Anuruddha and becomes a lay follower. Anuruddha was thus clearly capable of ignoring desire and seduction. Yet, the Buddha still makes a new precept that forbids spending the


\(^{22}\) de La Vallée Poussin, 1980, pp. 275–276.
night in the same room with a woman, seemingly because of the danger of being seduced. Not all monks might be as strong as Anuruddha.

The Pāli vinaya, the Mahāsāṃghikavinaya, and the Sarvāstivādavinaya all have similar stories. Each time, a woman potentially endangers a monk. In the Sarvāstivādavinaya, the Buddha compares women to warm food and drinks. People long for them, just as men long for women. The vinaya stresses the danger of women right at the beginning of the introductory story: when Anuruddha comes into a village where no lodging place for monks is provided, some young people try to foul him and direct him to the house of a prostitute. It is seen as a kind of practical joke, bound to put the monk into difficulties. Still, Anuruddha is able to resist. Difficulties are certainly the part of Anuruddha in the introductory story of the Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya. The vinaya relates how a young unmarried woman gets pregnant. She tells her brothers that she has been raped by a Buddhist monk. When Anuruddha arrives in the village, he stays at her home. He withstands her temptation efforts, and even converts her. This is not, however, the end of the story. When the brothers hear about Anuruddha staying at their sister’s home, they want to kill him. Anuruddha’s magical powers allow him to escape and even to convert many people. He decides to no longer stay in the house of lay people. However, when at another time he remains in a park, he is about to be

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23 On the sexual power of women, see, for instance, Wilson, 1996, pp. 70–71. Women, deceptively dangerous, lead men into transgression. The danger is present outside and inside the monastic context (see Heirman, 2001, pp. 278–289).

24 Pāli vinaya, Vin vol. 4, pp. 17–20; Mahāsāṃghikavinaya, T.1425: 381c28–382a26; Sarvāstivādavinaya, T.1435: 112c22–113b11. The Mahāsāṃghika story is slightly different: Anuruddha on his way to Śrāvastī meets a young lady who was sent by her mother to go and get water. The girl falls in love with him and asks her mother to give Anuruddha a room to spend the night. During the night she unsuccessfully tries to seduce him. There is no reference to a conversion.

attacked by some thieves. Luckily for him, the leader of the thieves recognises him and knowing the monk’s reputation, he leaves him alone. Moreover, the thieves are converted by Anuruddha. Again, the monk’s high level on the Buddhist path and his magical powers protect him from imminent danger. Anuruddha thus escapes twice from a most difficult situation, withstanding a woman who tries to seduce him, and avoiding thieves who try to kill him. Only his extremely high knowledge of the Buddhist path protects him. Less advanced monks might not be so lucky.

A quite different story is presented by the *Mahīśāsakavinaya*. It first relates how monks spend the night together with a woman (or women) in the same room. Their being together arouses sexual desire. As a result, some monks return to lay life, while other monks become non-Buddhist ascetics. This event is severely criticised by lay benefactors who see no difference between members of the monastic community and lay people. In a second introductory story, the *vinaya* relates how the monk Anuruddha is given a room in the house of young widow who is in search of a good partner. She tries to seduce him with her wealth and beautiful body, but Anuruddha only concentrates on transience, whereupon the lady becomes a lay follower. The stories of the *Mahīśāsakavinaya* present several motives. First, as in all *vinayas*, the *vinaya* warns about the danger of women seducing men and distracting them from the Buddhist path. In addition, two more dangers are highlighted: the reputation of the monastic community can potentially be damaged, and the community might lose monastic members.

The arguments of sexual danger and loss of reputation are also clearly highlighted in two rules of the *bhikṣunīvibhaṅga* (chapter for nuns):

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T.1428 (744b26-27): ‘If bhikṣuṇīs who are not sick sleep with two together on the same bed, they commit a pācittika.’

The Dharmaguptakavinaya has two introductory stories. The first story relates how two nuns sleep in the same bed. When some other nuns notice that two people are sleeping together, they wrongly assume that a nun is sleeping with a man. As a consequence, the nuns’ reputation is endangered. The second story is more complex. It relates how a nun takes care of a young woman while the woman’s husband, a general, has to go away for a long time. In order to protect her, she sleeps with her in the same bed. The lady, however, gets attached to the delicacy and tenderness of the nun’s body. When her husband returns, she does not want to go back to him, upon which the general loudly expresses his indignation. Thereupon, the Buddha does no longer allow nuns to sleep together, except in case of a nun who is seriously ill.

The above stories focus on two topics: the reputation of the nuns’ community and the danger of sexual attraction between women. The other vinayas highlight similar motives, except for the Mahāsāṃghikavinaya that only refers to the damage caused to the sleeping materials and to the bed if more than one person makes use of it at the same time. The Pāli vinaya relates how lay people criticise two nuns who share the same bed. They blame them for enjoying sensual pleasures. Apart from alluding to the danger of sexual attraction, the vinaya also underlines the damage done to the reputation of the saṃgha. The


28 The Dharmaguptakavinaya (T.1428: 744c1) adds that monks who go against this rule commit a duṣkṛta, lit. ‘a bad deed’, a rather small offence. Obviously, the gender roles have to be switched: the additional comment concerns two men sleeping together.

29 Mahāsāṃghikavinaya, T.1425: 538b18–c2.

30 Pāli vinaya, Vin vol. 4, pp. 288–289.
Mahīśāsakavinaya has two rules: first, it says that one should not share a bed with a lay woman or with a woman of another ascetic group.\textsuperscript{31} It arouses sexual desire and detracts from the monastic path. Because of this, the\textit{sangha} even loses members and is ridiculed. The\textit{vinaya} further stipulates that, if one has no other option than to share the same bed, one has to make sure that there is some kind of partition. A second rule adds that, equally, one should not share the bed with another nun.\textsuperscript{32} The\textit{Sarvāstivādavinaya} relates how two nuns who share the same bed are sexually attracted to each other.\textsuperscript{33} They are criticised by other nuns. Similarly, in the\textit{Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya} we read how two nuns, sharing a bed, make love.\textsuperscript{34}

One of these ladies seemingly gets pregnant. The Buddha proves, however, that it is not a real pregnancy. Thereupon, nuns are forbidden to share a bed. On the one hand, the story focuses on sexual desire, but on the other hand it also includes some seemingly illogical event: a pregnancy provoked by lesbian sexual contact. It puts this kind of contact at the same level as male–female intercourse, albeit the result is eventually different. It is a strong warning though. Still, the\textit{vinaya} allows an exception for nuns who travel and who cannot find more than one bed. They should keep their clothes on and should not touch each other.

As can be seen from the above, the topic of sharing a bed is discussed quite extensively. It is even extended to other sleeping materials, such as the bottom sheet and the bed covers:

\textbf{T.1428 (744c25-26)}: ‘If\textit{bhikṣunī}ś sleep together with the same bottom sheet and with the same covering, they commit, except in particular circumstances, a\textit{pācittika}.’

\textsuperscript{31} Mahīśāsakavinaya, T.1421: 95b4–13.

\textsuperscript{32} Mahīśāsakavinaya, T.1421: 95b14–17.


\textsuperscript{34} Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya, T.1443: 1003a17–b8.
The introductory story relates how nuns who sleep with the same bottom sheet and bed covers are criticised by other nuns, who thought that they slept with a man. Thereupon, the practice of sharing is forbidden. Some nuns are confronted, however, with the situation that they do not have two beds, and thus cannot go to sleep. Thereupon, the Buddha allows nuns individually to spread out their sleeping mat, and – in case it is cold – to use only one cover. They have to keep their underclothes on and they should not touch each other. In this way, they fend off the danger of sexual attraction and protect the reputation of the saṃgha.35

**Concluding remarks**

The above rules and guidelines have shown that the vinayas use a broad range of arguments when discussing sleeping practices. While on the one hand, sleepers lack intention, volition and knowledgeability, on the other hand, they might unwittingly cause damage. In this context, the most important factor seems to be the reputation of the community, combined with the danger of sexual attraction and the potential loss of monastic members. Moreover, as some vinaya remarks clearly suggest, during one’s sleep one might reveal one’s true nature, probably not all that a reassuring idea, at least to some monastics. This intermingled body of arguments, together with its rules and guidelines, will reach new audiences in other parts of the world, such as China. We therefore now turn our attention to the reception of these rules and arguments by prominent Chinese masters.

35 Most other vinayas have the same rule, albeit the separation between the two sleeping tools is at times less clear: Pāli vinaya, Vin vol. 4, p. 289; Mahiśāsakavinaya, T.1421: 95b4–27 (four pācittika rules dealing with either the same bed sheet either the same covering, and with sleeping with both monastic as well as with non-monastic partners); Mahāsāṃghikavinaya, T.1425: 538b18–c2; Sarvāstivādavinaya, T.1435: 320c25–321b7 (three pācittika rules concerning sleeping on the same bed, with the same sheet, or with the same covers).
2. Spread to China

In the first centuries of Chinese Buddhism, disciplinary and organisational guidelines were often lacking, as clearly exemplified by the traveller monk Faxian 法顯 who, at the end of the fourth century, states that he wants to undertake a journey from Chang’an to India with the purpose of obtaining an original version of the vinaya.\(^{36}\) Shortly afterwards, four full vinayas were translated into Chinese, confronting the Chinese community with a quite sudden and overwhelming richness. It prompted Chinese vinaya masters to write extensive commentaries and new compilations aimed at the Chinese monastic community. In addition, traveller monks such as Yijing 義淨 (635–713) continued to feed the Chinese community with personal travel accounts on organisational and disciplinary matters as practised in India. A few centuries later, a new genre, largely based on earlier commentaries and compilations, saw the light: the so-called qing gui 清規, ‘rules of purity’, the earliest extant compilation dating from the early twelfth century.

2.1. The first explosion of Chinese vinaya rules: commentaries, compilations and travel accounts

As discussed above, Chinese masters use several kinds of texts to disseminate organisational and disciplinary guidelines. They also do so for sleeping practices, in an attempt to guide Chinese monastics in one of the most inescapable daily matters, the time of sleep.

a. Early commentaries on vinaya rules

After four full vinayas had been translated in China in the early fifth century, vinaya rules and stipulations became widely known, and commentaries or additions were being written. One of\(^{36}\) Gaoseng Faxian zhuan 高僧法顯傳, T.2085: 857a6–8, 864b17, 864c1–3. On the dates of Faxian’s life and travels, see Deeg, 2005a, pp. 22–30.
the most influential masters was the vinaya master Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667), founder of the Nanshan lüzong 南山律宗, ‘the vinaya school of Nanshan’, a school that promoted the vinaya rules, and in particular the Dharmaguptakavinaya, seen as the vinaya tradition on which the first Chinese ordinations were based. As the abbot of the Ximing 西明 monastery near the capital Chang’an, Daoxuan wrote several vinaya commentaries, and actively promoted Buddhism at the imperial court. In his *Sifen lü shanfan buque xingshi chao* 四分律删繁補闕行事鈔, An Abridged and Explanatory Commentary on the Dharmaguptakavinaya (T.1804), he comments on the pācittika rules for monks and nuns. For most of the rules relevant to the present research, Daoxuan merely offers a sometimes detailed analysis of the information given by the several vinayas, without adding any strikingly new data. He particularly discusses the rules on sleeping in the same room with a woman, and with a non-ordained man, strongly underlining the danger of women, based on the assumption that a woman is always longing for a man, and inevitably harbours immorality.

*b. New compilations prompted by vinaya rules*

Apart from commentaries, the increasing consciousness of disciplinary rules also gave rise to extensive new compilations written by Chinese vinaya masters, in an attempt to guide the always growing Chinese monastic communities. A well-known disciplinary text is the *Da bijiu sanqian weiyi* 大比丘三千威儀, *Great (Sūtra) of Three Thousand Dignified*

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38 Respectively, T.1804: 75a17–b25 (pācittika 4) and 75b25–c14 (pācittika 5).

Observances of a Monk, probably compiled in China in the fifth century (T.1470). The text discusses many elements of everyday life, including how to use sleeping facilities. In its guidelines on sleep, the avoidance of noise plays an essential role. Life in the monastery needs to be relatively quiet and this is also true for the time of sleep. When stepping in or out of the bed, cleaning the top of the bed, or opening the door to the sleeping room, one should be as quiet as possible. Equally, one should avoid noises such as yawning, or sighing (thus showing one’s concern with daily business). Besides silence, the text also calls on monks to observe some necessary precautions: one should always shake one’s shoes before putting them on (probably to make sure no animals are inside) and, before opening a door, one should snap one’s fingers three times (to prevent hurting someone who might stand behind the door). Finally, some stipulations underline the proper use of sleeping furniture, and especially the correct sleeping position: one should never creep on to the bed, nor lean against the wall or even face the wall while asleep. Neither should one lie on one’s stomach, or adopt improper positions, such as lying with the knees pulled up. One should dry one’s feet before stepping into bed, and, when leaving the place, one should put on one’s clothes. One should always get up at the right time. Special attention goes to the image of the Buddha: one should sleep with one’s head in the direction of it and never turn one’s back to it. Still, while asleep, one should not face the Buddha, which makes it clear that sleeping is, in fact, seen as not very

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40 Although the colophon to the text presents it as a Han translation by An Shigao (安世高, second century), the Da biqiu sanqian wei yi has probably been compiled in China in the course of the fifth century (Hirakawa, 1970, pp. 193–196).


42 For a discussion on silence, see Heirman, 2009.
respectful. In the same vein, it is forbidden to recite texts while lying on one’s bed, or to greet and pay respect to a superior who is lying down.\(^{43}\)

As can be seen from the above, the *Da biqiu sanqian weiyi* puts a clear focus on the aspect of decorum, attributing a more central place to it than it had in the earlier *prātimokṣa* rules. The text also perceives sleep in a rather negative way. When calling to get up at the right time, the text seems to plead against a potential individual desire to sleep longer than average.

Besides the *Da biqiu sanqian weiyi*, a second text to have greatly influenced the organisation of the growing Chinese monastic community is the *Jiaojie xinxue biqiu xinghu liüyi*, *Exhortation on Manners and Etiquette for Novices in Training* (T.1897), compiled by the above-mentioned *vinaya* master Daoxuan.\(^{44}\) In this very instructive text on how to teach disciplinary rules to new members of the monastic community, Daoxuan equally discusses proper sleeping practices, while giving several guidelines on how to behave in the dormitory.\(^{45}\) First of all, he stipulates that, as a newcomer, one should not share a room with someone who has already spent five years in the monastery, but only with disciples of the same seniority as oneself. One should lead a relatively quiet life, and be careful not to hurt anyone. One should never disturb someone else’s sleep, for instance when studying. One should not make the bed dirty. In summer, it is recommended to dry one’s bed clothes in the sun. And of course, the dormitory needs to be kept clean. Daoxuan further enumerates some proper sleeping positions: one should sleep on one’s right side, facing outside and never facing

\(^{43}\) Respectively, T.1470: 915c22 and 916b8–9: when lying down, a superior should not pay respect to anyone, nor should he receive respectful greetings. The *Da biqiu sanqian weiyi* further indicates that one should not go to sleep before having finished all recitations (T.1470: 919a13).

\(^{44}\) On the influence of this text see, in particular, Yifa, 2002, pp. 26–28 (on the attribution of the text to Daoxuan, see Yifa, 2002, p. 226, note 103).

\(^{45}\) T.1897: 871a5–b2.
the wall. One should not face upwards and cross the feet, nor should one sleep on one’s left side. One should never sleep naked and one should make sure that one’s clothes do not end up under one’s feet. One needs to avoid thinking about bad things while asleep. One should fold up the *uttarāsaṅga* and put it on the bed, and one should use the *saṃghāṭi* as a pillow. Finally, one should get up immediately after waking up, and start the meditation exercises.

The *Jiaojie xinxue biqiu xinghu lüyi* emphasises the proper decorum expected from monastics. Sleeping is considered to be a time that should not be extended. It is also a time over which one has no real control. This might be the reason why one is asked never to face the wall, so that monks can keep an eye on each other’s activities. Daoxuan also asks monks to sleep on their right side. This is the so-called ‘lion’s posture’ (*shīzi wò fā* 師子臥法), recommended, for instance, by the Buddha to Ānanda in a rather long passage of the *Zhong ahan jing* 中阿含經, *Madhyamāgama*. The posture is considered to be ‘straight’ (*zhēng* 正), and is said to make the lion king happy and satisfied. A monk should therefore sleep in the same way. While asleep, he should appease his mind, and for this the lion’s posture is seen as

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46 A monk has a standard set of three robes: the *antarvāsaka* (inner robe), the *uttarāsaṅga* (upper robe), and the *saṃghāṭi* (outer cloak). See, for instance, Horner, 1938–66, vol. 2, pp. 1–2, note 2: ‘The *antarvāsaka* is put on at the waist, and hangs down to just above the ankles, being tied with the kāyabandhana, a strip of cloth made into a belt or girdle […]. The *uttarāsaṅga* is the upper robe worn when a monk is in a residence. It covers him from neck to ankle, leaving one shoulder bare. […] The *saṃghāṭi* is put on over this when the monk goes out. It may be exactly the same size as the *uttarāsaṅga*, but it consists of double cloth, since to make it two robes are woven together.’ For the significance of these robes in China, see in particular, Kieschnick, 1999, pp. 12–14 and 2003, pp. 90–92. For an extensive study of Chinese monastic guidelines on robes, see Guo, 2001.

47 T.1: 473c9–474a8 (with many thanks to bhikkhu Anālayo for pointing out this passage to me). It is also the Buddha’s position when he is about to enter *parinivāṇa*, as noticed, for instance, by the very influential traveller monk Xuanzang 玄奘, who stayed in India and in some parts of Central Asia between 629 and 645, in his *Da Tang xi yu ji* 大唐西域記, *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions* (T.2087: 904a20–21).
the best possible sleeping position. The *Madhyamāgama* compares this way of sleeping with a monk’s proper attitude while in a village: on his daily begging round, a monk should straighten his clothes and wear his alms bowl properly. The text thus links the lion’s posture with both a proper way of thinking and to the decorum of the *saṃgha* as a whole. Daoxuan’s guideline to sleep on his right side is clearly in line with the *Madhyamāgama*’s recommendation. Also, most of Daoxuan’s other stipulations regarding the proper sleeping position are not invented by him or by some fellow Chinese masters. They are, in fact, based on the Indian *vinayas*, albeit not on the *prātimokṣa* rules discussed above, but on several guidelines scattered all over the *vinayas*, guidelines that Daoxuan in all probability has consulted when writing the *Jiaojie xinxue biqiu xinghu lüyi*. The clearest sleeping directives are given by the *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, a *vinaya* which, as we will see, explicitly perceives a proper sleeping position as a sign of moral behaviour.\(^48\) Sleeping with the face downwards (on the belly) is considered to be the sleeping position of an *asura*, while sleeping with the face upwards (on the back) is seen as the position of a hungry ghost.\(^49\) If one sleeps on one’s left side, one sleeps as a man full of desire. The proper sleeping position is to lie on the right side, just as the lion king, who always takes care of his body. The head should face the bed frame, and the feet should never point to a teacher or to an elderly monk. In the beginning of the night one should reflect upon one’s life, and only in the middle of the night, should one go to sleep. One should put the feet together, close the mouth and make the tongue rest on the palate of the mouth. One should lean one’s head on the right hand and stretch the left hand along the body. One should never give up reflecting, and one always has to think of getting up. In any case, one should get up at the end of the night, before the sun comes out, and start to do

\(^{48}\) *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425: 507a15–b1.

\(^{49}\) An *asura* belongs to a group of beings considered to be the opponents of the gods, and is incorporated into the Buddhist cosmology as one of the six possible modes of rebirth. Another, but much lower mode of rebirth, is the so-called hungry ghost (*preta*), subject to an insatiable appetite as a punishment for greed shown in former lives.
mental exercises. However, if during the night bad dreams appear, or if one unconsciously turns over, it is no offence. If one is old or sick, or if one has an abscess on the right side, one can sleep in a position deviating from the norm. It is no offence. To sum up, the Mahāsāṃghikavīṇaya clearly presents sleep as a period between mental exercises, meant to be as short as possible. The sleeping position is moralised, and respect is to be shown to teachers and to elderly monks. Only sleeping on one’s right side is seen as justifiable. Unconscious transgressions are, as quite logical in a Buddhist context, not seen as an offence, while exceptions are allowed for old and sick monks. The other vinayas contain similar, but generally much shorter, directives. In this context, the story of a confrontation between the Buddha and Devadatta, as related in the Mahīśāsaka-, the Dharmaguptaka-, and the Sarvāstivādavinaya is most interesting. The most detailed account is the one of the Sarvāstivādins. It describes how both the Buddha and Devadatta fold up the uttarāsaṅga and put it on the bed, while using the samghāṭī as a pillow. They are both lying down on their right sides. A heavenly ghost, a follower of the Buddha’s law, makes Devadatta shift over on to his left side. As a result, he starts to snore and to talk in his sleep. He also groans and shakes his body, breaking off his teeth. Thereupon, Śāriputra invokes the monks to praise the Buddha, his law and the rules of the samgha, and to criticise Devadatta, who clearly has committed many offences, and should end up in the deepest hell, the Avīci hell, without any possible rescue. The Dharmaguptakavīṇaya further urges monks always to stay alert during the first and the last part of the night, to meditate and to take away all mental hindrances. Only in the middle part of the night can one lie down on one’s right side, while still striving to

50 Mahīśāsakavīṇaya, T.1421: 164c1–5; Dharmaguptakavīṇaya, T.1428: 909c22–26; Sarvāstivādavinaya, T.1435: 265b28–c5.
remove all obstacles.\footnote{The *Sapudo bu pinimodejia* 薩婆多部毘尼摩得勒伽, a commentary on the *Sarvāstivādavinaya*, translated by Saṃghavarman in 435 CE,\footnote{gives similar ideas.\footnote{The text explains how to sleep and how to lie down. Unless one is sick, one should not sleep during the daytime, or when the lights are on. One should go to sleep after the first part of the night. Before lying down, one should fold up the *uttarāsaṅga*. The *saṃghāṭī* is used as a pillow. One should sleep on the right side, with the feet properly together. One should not spread out the feet or the hands (just as one should not spread one’s clothes everywhere), nor have disturbed thoughts. In the later part of the night one should get up quickly, and restart the meditation exercises.\footnote{Also the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition, translated after Daoxuan’s time, contains similar guidelines. The *Genbensapodo bu lü she* 根本薩婆多部律攝, a commentary on the *bhikṣu-prātimokṣa* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition, translated by Yijing (T.1458: 592a15–23), for instance, says that in case there is no bed, one can sleep on one’s clothes. The *saṃghāṭī* can be used as a pillow. The text also urges monastics to always sleep on their right side, the feet well together. One should not move the body, and one should always think of getting up. It is important not to have obstructive thoughts, just as one should not put one’s clothes in disorder. One should sleep in moderation, and get up early. The proper sleeping time is in the middle of night, in-between activities. One should not sleep during daytime. If one is disturbed during one’s sleep, one should get up and go to a more quiet place. These guidelines are said to be followed by the Buddha himself as exemplified in several Mūlasarvāstivāda passages (T.1447: 1052b25–27; T. 1450: 99b9–11; T.1451: 392a2–3, and 406a14-15).}}}

\textit{c. A personal travel report: Yijing’s travel account}

The traveller monk Yijing 義淨, who stayed in India and South Asia between 671 and 695, wrote down his experiences in a travel account, the *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan* 南海寄歸內法傳

\footnote{T.1428: 963c27–964a4. This sleeping position is compared to ‘a lion’s posture’ in T.1428: 592c28–29 and 909c24.}

\footnote{Cf. Demiéville et al., 1978, p. 123; Yuyama, 1979, p. 8.}

\footnote{T.1441: 600c15–21.}

\footnote{Also the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition, translated after Daoxuan’s time, contains similar guidelines. The *Genbensapodo bu lü she* 根本薩婆多部律攝, a commentary on the *bhikṣu-prātimokṣa* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition, translated by Yijing (T.1458: 592a15–23), for instance, says that in case there is no bed, one can sleep on one’s clothes. The *saṃghāṭī* can be used as a pillow. The text also urges monastics to always sleep on their right side, the feet well together. One should not move the body, and one should always think of getting up. It is important not to have obstructive thoughts, just as one should not put one’s clothes in disorder. One should sleep in moderation, and get up early. The proper sleeping time is in the middle of night, in-between activities. One should not sleep during daytime. If one is disturbed during one’s sleep, one should get up and go to a more quiet place. These guidelines are said to be followed by the Buddha himself as exemplified in several Mūlasarvāstivāda passages (T.1447: 1052b25–27; T. 1450: 99b9–11; T.1451: 392a2–3, and 406a14-15).}
Although it would be wrong to interpret such an account as a pure eyewitness report, it still provides the reader with valuable information on how Yijing perceived monastic life. In this sense, his travel account is often similar to a normative text, presenting an (Indian) ideal as a kind of mirror for the home public. In his account, Yijing discusses several guidelines on how to spend the night. He particularly describes material aspects of sleeping furniture. In this context, his (short) plea against the use of screens (to separate sleeping places) reveals that, despite the above guidelines compiled by Chinese masters, some monks at least were longing for a kind of privacy in the dormitory. According to Yijing, the use of a screen to hide the bed is illogical, since only those people qualified to sleep in the monks’ dormitory can actually see other monks sleeping. So, why would there be any reason for hiding anything? Yijing’s remark is obviously made against the background of the rule stipulating that monks should not sleep in the same room as non-ordained people. Furthermore, as we have seen above, monks are not supposed to face the wall (easily extended to screens) while sleeping. Still, Yijing’s reference to screens seems to suggest that, in China, monks actually did make use of them, a practice which Yijing finds unnecessary if the vinaya rules are implemented properly.

To conclude, it is clear that the vinayas, commentaries, new compilations and travel accounts all bring their arguments and visions to bear upon the daily sleeping practices of the monastic community. While actions performed in one’s dreams do not constitute any breach of vinaya rules, they are not as harmless as one might think. Not only can they reveal one’s true nature, they also potentially endanger one’s reputation, and by extension the name and fame of the saṃgha. Sleep basically receives a negative perception, and should not be extended beyond what is necessary. In this context, it is not surprising that monastic masters

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55 For a discussion, see in particular, Deeg, 2005a, pp. 37–39, and 2005b, pp. 101-103.

compiled detailed normative guidelines on sleep in an attempt to constrain the consequences resulting from it. These guidelines constitute an ample source for all Chinese monastic generations to come, as we will see in the following and last section of this paper.

2.2. A new genre develops: the ‘rules of purity’ *qing gui* 清規

As seen above, proper sleeping practices and the reputation of the monastic community are of high significance for *vinaya* compilers and Chinese *vinaya* masters alike. These aspects return in the so-called ‘rules of purity’, *qing gui* 清規, which started to develop in the eighth century, particularly among Chan monks. 57 While the *qing gui* are clearly relying on earlier compilations of disciplinary rules, they also constitute a new phenomenon, primarily aiming at the practical organisation of large public monasteries. Combined with the fact that Buddhism in India gradually disappeared – contrary to the situation in China, where large monasteries, particularly influenced by Chan practices, still had strong public support – the *qing gui* also mark the end of a continuous Buddhist influx from India to China. The oldest extant code is the *Chanyuan qing gui* 禪苑清規, *The Pure Rules for the Chan Monastery*, compiled by Changlu Zongze 長蘆宗赜 (?–1107?) in 1103. While not replacing earlier *vinaya* rules, it offers additional practical organisational guidelines. In this context, the *Chanyuan qing gui* also discusses sleeping practices, and explicitly advises lying on the right side, with the left hand on one’s left hip, as if carrying a knife. 58 According to Yifa, the reference to a knife stems from the practice of warriors who carried their knives on their left

57 This does not imply that other traditions did not write monastic guidelines. On the contrary, nearly identical rules were compiled in, for instance, Tiantai monasteries, such as the guidelines compiled by the Tiantai master Zunshi 遵式 (964–1032) (described in Yifa, 2002, pp. 35–37). Still, from the Song dynasty on, *qing gui* rules were considered to be typically Chan. They prevailed in all large monastic institutes (Yifa, 2002, pp. 37–52).

58 W 111: 886b15: *shui ce dai dao you xie* 睡則帶刀右脅.
This recommended sleeping position can also be found in the biographies of the monk Baizhang 百丈 (749–814), traditionally seen as the founder of the ‘rules of purity’:\(^{60}\) Song gaoseng zhuan 宋高僧傳, Song Biographies of Eminent Monks, compiled by the monk Zanning 贊寧 (919–1001) in 982, and Jingde chuandeng lu 景德傳燈錄, Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Lamp, compiled by the monk Daoyuan 道原 (n.d.) in 1004.\(^{61}\) The latter text explicitly sees sleep as a short rest between periods of meditation.\(^{62}\) The Chanyuan qing gui instructs monks further on how to deal with sleep in a Chan monastery, where sleep and meditation exercises alternate in the same hall.\(^{63}\) Decorum and respectful behaviour are the focus of these guidelines. One is urged to always arrange bedding material and clothes in the most proper way. When sleeping, the monastic cloth should be put next to the pillow covered with a clean towel. One should not ascend the platform with one’s back towards other monks, nor should one stand or walk on the platform, remove the clothes from the upper body, nor lean the head against the wall.

Later collections of rules of purity all contain guidelines very similar to the above regulations. About 100 years after compilation of the Chanyuan qing gui, for instance, in a text called Ruzhong riyong 入眾日用, Daily Life in the Assembly, a monastic text compiled in 1209 by the Chan monk Wuliang Zongshou 無量宗壽, the same items are again at the core of

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\(^{61}\) Respectively, T.2061: 770c27 and T.2076, p.251a12–14.

\(^{62}\) From a table on the daily regimen for Chinese monks in the Song dynasty, as written out by Yifa (2002, p. 39), one can see that sleeping was reduced to the time between 11 pm and 3 am, between meditation exercises.

\(^{63}\) W 111: 886b16–887a1.
the guidelines on sleep. A special focus lies on minimisation of sleep, on keeping silence and on the correct sleeping posture. As always, one should sleep on the right side. Sleeping with the face upwards is seen as the sleep of a corpse, while sleeping with the face downward is called ‘lewd sleep’ (yin shui 娼睡). These improper positions evoke evil dreams. Similar information is repeated in several qing gui texts that were compiled in next century, laying the basis for all future Chinese monastic organisation: the late thirteenth century text Conglin jiaoding qing gui zongyao 叢林校定清規總要, Essentials of the Revised Rules of Purity for Major Monasteries, compiled by the monk Jinhua Weimian 金華惟勉 (W 112: 53b16–54a3), the Chanlin beiyong qing gui 禪林備用清規, Auxiliary Rules of Purity for Chan Monasteries, compiled in 1311 by the monk Zeshan Yixian 澤山弋咸 (W 112: 140a6–11), and the very influential Chixiu Baizhang qing gui 敕修百丈清規, Baizhang’s Rules of Purity Revised on Imperial Order, compiled by Dongyang Dehui 東陽德輝 between 1335 and 1343 (T.2025: 1138a5, 1146a7–9, and 1158a11).

Conclusion

We started this paper with the question of how innocent sleeping time really is, since acts performed during one’s sleep, and while dreaming, do not incur any guilt, due to a lack of intention, volition and awareness. Still, these acts are not as harmless as one might think. During one’s sleep one can unwillingly cause a loss of respect or self-respect, bringing damage to one’s reputation, or to the reputation of the community. In this context, the Indian

64 For an introduction to and a translation of this text, see Foulk, 1995. Passages on sleeping can be found at several instances (W 111: 943a11–17, 943b18–944a2, 947a5–10). Just as the Chanyuan qing gui, Wuliang Zongshou instructs one to put the robes in front of the pillow when sleeping, but he adds that people do not follow this guideline and instead put the robes at the feet. This small remark allows a rare glimpse into the implementation of the pure rules in the Southern Song dynasty.
vinaya rules also refer to the danger of sexual attraction and to a potential loss of monastic members. Equally threatening to sleepers and to the community they belong to, is the fact that, during one’s sleep, one’s true nature or at least part of it can unconsciously be displayed. When sleeping, one seems to lose control, turning sleep into a relatively dangerous occupation. And, last but not least, sleeping is opposed to activity of body and mind. It is a resting period that is, at times, negatively perceived in the vinayas and Chinese manuals alike.65

In sum, even if acts performed during one’s sleep do not involve any guilt, they are not harmless. They can undermine the reputation of the sleepers and of their community, and reveal parts of one’s nature one prefers not to display. Furthermore, sleepers are not active, and can, as such, attract criticism. This negative perception of sleep is a continuous aspect of discourses on sleep in Indian as well as in Chinese normative texts.

65 Control of the body and minimisation of sleep is equally appearing in texts aiming at lay followers. A striking example is a set of ten regulations drawn up by the Liang dynasty emperor Jianwen (reigned 549–551), called the Baguanzhai zhi 八關齋制 (Regulations for the Overnight Retreat for Lay People; T.2103: 324c4–26). Three out of the ten rules deal with sleeping, and explicitly call for punishments for those sleeping during preaching times, for those not reporting to the rector a neighbour falling asleep, and for those making mutual agreements not to report each other when falling asleep (for a translation, see Yifa, 2002, p. 19).
Abbreviations


References


