

# **A Study of the Pravrajyāvastu of the *Vinayasūtra***

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## **Abstract**

The *Vinayasūtra*, which was compiled in the 6th century by Guṇaprabha, the great Vinaya master of Mūlasarvāstivāda, is in sūtra style, which makes possible the containing of the essence of the voluminous disciplinary data belonging to the sect on a comparatively acceptable scale. Based upon works in the same style, the author rearranged the traditional seventeen Vastu(s), and by doing so, the materials concerned were topically summarized and retouched, the work thus becomes a compendium of Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya. Although the *Vinayasūtra* occupies an outstanding place in the disciplinary literature of the sect, it is by no means a handbook aiming to directly guide the juristical practice in monasteries, which is otherwise under profound influence of such manuals as the *Ekottarakarmaśataka*, the *Pr̥cchā*, the *Vinayasamgraha* etc.

In the middle period of the 9th century, the *Vinayasūtra* and the *Vinayasūtraṭīkā* were rendered into Tibetan, and since then constantly recited and reworded in the circle of Tibetan intelligentsia. In the present work, the Sanskrit texts found in Zha lu monastery and the two versions of the translation of the sūtra(s) preserved in Tanjur are consulted and compiled to create a more readable version of the work. From the stand point of view of orthography, the rendering containing in the *Vinayasūtravyākhyāna* and the *Vinayasūtravṛtti* shares many characteristics with P.T.903, which is of an archaic nature, and therefore might be an almost unrevised version of the rendering of the work. Although the divergences between the two renderings have escaped the notice of modern scholars, they had been fully recognized and on some occasions became main topic discussed in the commentaries penned by Tibetan monk scholars.

The *Vinayasūtra* is of a subtle and compact nature, which renders it difficult to be understood without consulting the commentaries. The Auto-commentary mainly concentrates on explanation and justification of the author's rearrangement and compaction of the data by means of citing from works of various sources, therefore can hardly be deciphered and made use of, the situation is further worsened by the fact that the rendering of the Auto-commentary is much under the ordinary level (shing tu ngan), as is remarked by Buston, a conclusion confirmed by the collation so far carried out. However, the *Vinayasūtraṭīkā* by Dharmamitra provides us with detailed annotation on nearly every wordings of the work, particles included, the logical role of each sūtra in the net of the aphorisms is also in most cases explicitly

pointed out, the rendering, furthermore, according to the opinion of Buton—and it is true—is extremely accurate (*shing tu bzang*), which finally made it the most valuable one among the commentaries of the *Vinayasūtra*. Moreover, in the commentaries authored by indigenous scholars, we find sometimes considerably divergent views from those represented in canonical commentaries, which merit further study since they carry information concerning the dynamic interaction between dissimilar cultural spheres during the process of the dissemination of the *Vinayasūtra*.

The *Vinayasūtra* and its four canonical commentaries were translated into Mongolian in the middle period of the 18th century, a romanized version of the Mongolian rendering of the *Vinayasūtra* is provided in the present work in the hope that it might become a somewhat useful material in related fields due to its readily available background of Tibetan original—there is no evidence for the consultation of the Sanskrit text on the part of the Mongolian translator—and Sanskrit text.

There exists no rendering of the *Vinayasūtra* in extant Chinese Tripiṭaka, however, parallel texts can be identified in the rendering of the works of the same sect by Yijing, they can be valuable sources for future study and provide equivalents for our rendering of the work. The remarks on the rendering of Yijing by modern scholars are problematic in that they were based upon a presupposed yet untenable commonness between the Sanskrit text underlying the Tibetan rendering which accords well with Gilgit manuscripts and that used by Yijing, the result of our collation, however, shows that they should be at variance with each other, therefore conclusive evaluation of Yijing's production has to be suspended at present stage for lacking of sufficient materials.

**Key words:** Guṇaprabha Vinayasūtra Mūlasarvāstivāda Buddhist literature