



Text formation of the earliest Buddhist literature,  
with special reference to the Bhikkhuni Vinaya

## **Text formation of the earliest Buddhist literature, with special reference to the Bhikkhuni Vinaya**

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Some of my most recent research is on various problematic aspects of bhikkhuni Vinaya in its various recensions. In particular, it seems that the bhikkhuni Vinaya has been maintained less accurately and is less consistently revised than the bhikkhu Vinaya. So it seems that not only can we question certain commonly held interpretations of bhikkhuni Vinaya rules, but we can see more vividly the process of textual evolution. This has certain implications for our wider understanding of Buddhist texts. In particular, I have been following up the suggestion by Shayne Clark in a recent paper that the Pali Vinaya is, in many instances, quite distinct from the mainland Vinayas taken as a whole. In addition to the cases he refers to, such as the siksadattaka, I have found many instances in the bhikkhuni Vinaya where all the mainland Vinayas are in agreement, and the Pali stands alone. The simplest explanation for this is that the Pali was geographically and dogmatically isolated. In all the instances of this that I have found, it seems that the Pali retains the earliest forms, which is obviously relevant for our understanding of the earliest recoverable forms of the Buddhist scriptures.