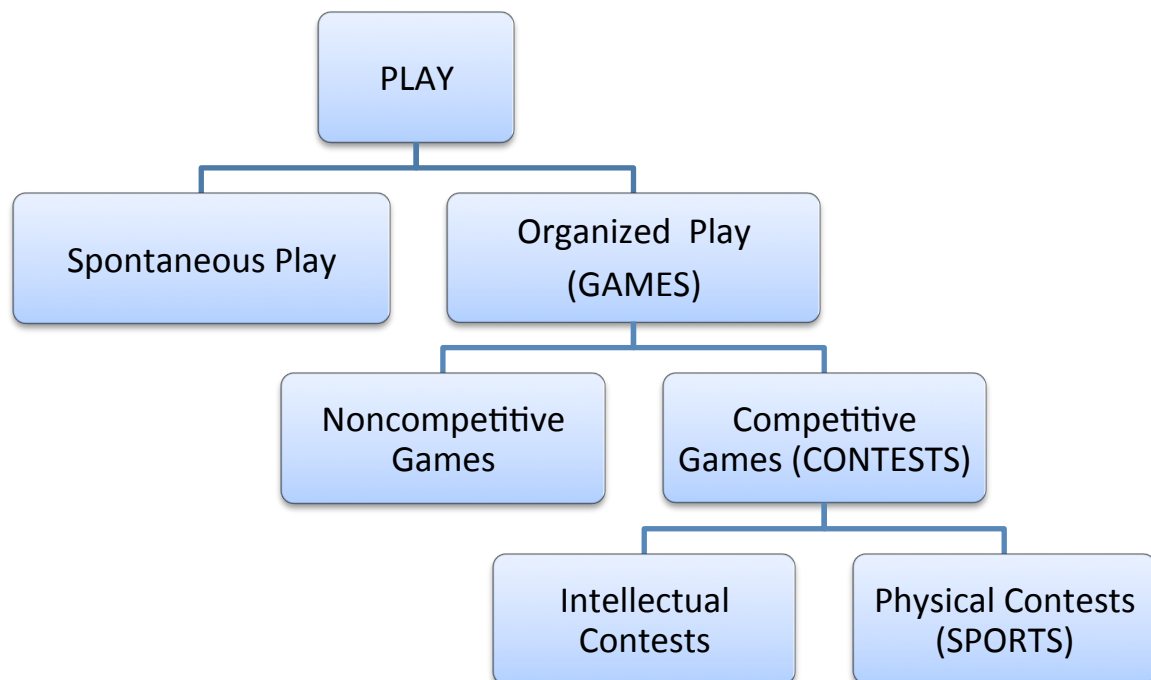


Body Movement and Sport Activities: A Buddhist Normative Perspective from India to China

Introduction

Activities related to the body are an integral part of daily life, also in Buddhist monastic environments. Obviously, such activities can be interpreted in a variety of ways. As our title shows, we will focus on body movement as well as on sport activities, leaving aside mental activities. Still, body and mind can and should not be fully separated. Moreover, 'activity' is linked to a network of concepts, that all play a significant role when monastic lawmakers tried to establish some norms and rules related to bodily actions. In this context, a diagram made by Allen Guttmann (1978: 9) and further discussed by Charles Prebish (1993: xv) is most useful:



Several of the above concepts will be crucial in our present research. First of all, there is the concept of 'sport' as a physical activity, always involving some idea of contest. Not surprisingly, as we will see, such physical activities are often discussed in the same context as competitive intellectual activities. While training of both the body and the mind regularly receives positive attention, the idea of 'competition' easily attracts negative connotations, such as 'chance', or even worse 'gambling'. This is part of the concepts of games and play, activities that can be beneficial to body and

mind, but at the same time, are linked to 'idleness' and 'lack of seriousness'. In this context, Charles Prebish (1993: 20) in a study on religion and sport, refers to the famous book of Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens, A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (1955: 13), where he argues that play is "a free activity standing quite consciously outside "ordinary" life as being "not serious", but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly." This lack of seriousness, among, as we will discuss, other negative connotations, prompted Buddhist disciplinary masters to quite sharply restrict plays, games, contests and sports, although with some notable exceptions. Restrictions sometimes even apply to all kinds of body movement, even when play is not at stake. On the other hand, body movement is also regularly praised for its beneficial effects on health.

Confronted with the above tensions, disciplinary masters often struggled to find a balance between acceptable and non-acceptable physical activities. This is also the case in contemporary monastic communities, both in Taiwan and in Mainland China. Contemporary monastic masters respond with a multiplicity of voices, as we discuss in another contribution of the present book XXXXX. Several arguments in favor or against sport activities are mentioned. Most known maybe, is the promotion of basketball and other sports by master Xingyun (born in 1927) (cross-reference to a few primary sources of Xingyun), founder of the Foguangshan monastery in Taiwan. As discussed in detail by Yu Junwei (2011), Xingyun sees sport activities, such as basketball, soccer and gymnastics, but also intellectual games, such as chess, as a means to promote Buddhism. These activities namely show how Buddhist monastics engage in daily life, a practice which fits well to the thoughts of the so-called humanistic Buddhism, that seeks to connect to modern life and to lay followers.¹ In that sense, sport brings the public into contact with Buddhism, attracting newcomers (not only monastics, but also lay people). And it is good for health. Xingyun particularly favors basketball. Although winning or losing is said to be of no importance, he still likes teams to win contests so as to give a good image of Buddhism (Yu, 2011: 30-33). Interesting for our present research, is that Xingyun also compares sport to Buddhist exercises such as walking and practical labor, and to a *bodhisattva* way of life, with values such as helping each other, controlling oneself, repenting when breaking rules, and tolerating others (Yu, 2011: 31). Xingyun lists five

¹ For a discussion on Xingyun's interpretation of humanistic Buddhism, see, in particular, Pittman, 2001: 273-277; Chandler, 2004: 43-77.

lessons a Buddhist youth can learn from playing basketball: discipline, teamwork, patience, perseverance, and humility (Chandler, 2004: 186). He thus promotes sport for both Buddhist monastics and Buddhist lay people, as a way to promote Buddhism and to benefit health.

Still, as we have shown in our chapter on XXX, physical activities for monastics are not uncontested, and while arguments in favor of it refer to activities and values important in the many centuries of Buddhist history (such as walking exercises, physical labor and a *bodhisattva* attitude), arguments against physical activities just as well refer to issues that have been important for Buddhist monastics from the past to the present day. Let us just take the example of swimming, that has been discussed from the very start of Buddhist disciplinary texts, and that is still a matter monastics are very conscious of. As mentioned by Yu Junwei (2011: 29-30) and Stuart Chandler (2004: 186), for instance, master Xingyun learned to swim at the age of three. He was very good at it. However, when he became a Buddhist monk, he could no longer do so, and he turned instead to basketball. This small detail of Xingyun's life again shows how sensitive swimming was and is. As we will see below, this is most likely due to the fact that it is specifically forbidden in disciplinary texts. Also, one inevitably displays one's body when wearing a swimming suit, a very sensitive topic for Buddhist monastics. Displaying one's body, especially to lay people, is firmly seen as unsuitable.² This is also the opinion of the Taiwanese master Wu Yin (born in 1940), currently president of the Luminary Buddhist nunnery, Xiangguang nunnery. In her book, *Choosing Simplicity* (2001: 179), she refers to the thirty-seventh *pācittika* rule for nuns in the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (parallel to *pācittika* 52 for monks), which says that a nun should not play in the water.³ Although the rule is not explicitly referring to swimming, Wu Yin still advises against it, and sees swimming (certainly in areas open to lay people) as a violation of the precept. She acknowledges that swimming can be a

² For a study on displaying the body when bathing as discussed in historical Buddhist disciplinary texts, see Heirman and Torck, 2012: 27-51; Kieschnick 2013: 112-116.

³ T.1428, p.735b25 (nuns); T.1428, p.672b20-c29 (monks); a *pācittika* (or variants) is an offence that needs to be expiated (cf. Heirman, 2002a: 141-147). The *Dharmaguptakavinaya* explains that 'playing in the water' (*shui zhong xi* 水中戲) means 'to go cheerfully from one bank to the other, to go with the current or against the current, to dive here and to come there, to write in the water with the hands, to throw water at one another, to play with an alms bowl full of water' (Heirman, 2002a: 575; T.1428, p.672c19-22). Still, in some situations, there is no offense, such as when on the road one needs to wade through water, or in case one loses something and takes it out of the water. Also, when one learns to float, moving the arms and splashing in the water, there is no offense (T.1428, p.672c24-29). Basically, the latter exception allows to learn to swim or to float in the water in order to be safe in case one needs to cross a river.

good exercise and can be beneficial for health reasons, but she also strongly warns against running the risk of attracting the attention of men, and states that other ways to improve health ought to be sought. In this way, displaying the body when swimming also gets a gender aspect, linking it to sensual and even sexual attraction. She equally associates swimming with sun bathing. She does not explain this connection, but in a country with many beaches, sun bathing is easily linked to leisure and beauty, ideas that are deemed unfit to nuns.⁴

As we can see from the above, contemporary discussions on physical activities are intimately linked to earlier rules of monastic discipline. It is to these rules that we now turn our attention, first to the traditional *vinaya* rules, and then to the writings of Medieval Chinese masters. As is well known, six full *vinaya* texts are extant. These are the Pāli *vinaya* (extant only in the Pāli language) and, in chronological order of translation into Chinese: the *Shisong lü* 十誦律 (T.1435; *Sarvāstivādivinaya*); the *Sifen lü* 四分律 (T.1428; *Dharmaguptakavinaya*); the *Mohesengqi lü* 摩訶僧祇律 (T.1425; *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*); the *Mishasai bu hexi wufen lü* 彌沙塞部和醯五分律 (T.1421; *Mahīśāsakavinaya*); and the *Genbenshuoyiqieyou bu pinaiye* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶 (TT.1442–1451; *Mūlasarvāstivādivinaya*).⁵ The *Sarvāstivādivinaya*, *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* and *Mahīśāsakavinaya* were all translated in the fifth century CE, while the *Mūlasarvāstivādivinaya* was translated in the eighth century.

All these *vinaya* texts provided the Chinese communities with a large collection of guidelines, which were immediately and widely debated. This led to a large corpus of commentaries, as well as to many new manuals written by Chinese monks who strove to improve the structure and discipline of their monasteries. In this way, monastic masters tried to interpret disciplinary guidelines in the new setting of China, remaining faithful to the Buddhist ideas expressed in the *vinayas*.⁶ The Chinese masters who wrote these commentaries and manuals were thus deeply influenced by the *vinayas*, but at the same time they were also strongly attracted to a new

⁴ Still, in 2011, a lifesaving association of Taiwan organized a swimming training program for monks and nuns in order to learn them to save people's life, a duty considered as very important for members of the monastic community. Around two hundred monastics, some of them coming from Korea, Bhutan and Vietnam participated (<http://focustaiwan.tw/news/atod/201109180014.aspx>, last access May 21, 2017).

⁵ Apart from a few fragments, these *vinayas* are no longer extant in an Indic language, with the exception of the *Mūlasarvāstivādivinaya*, of which substantial Sanskrit sections survive. The latter *vinaya* has also been translated into Tibetan. For details on the translation of these *vinaya* traditions, see Heirman, 2007: 175–181; Clarke, 2015.

⁶ For a discussion, see, among others, Heirman and Torck, 2012: 9–16.

movement, commonly called Mahāyāna (Great Vehicle), which reached China in the very early stages of Chinese Buddhism. A central concept in Mahāyāna Buddhism is the *bodhisattva* figure, ‘a being oriented towards enlightenment’. This concept goes along with new guidelines, the so-called *bodhisattva* rules, aiming at a good ethical life. Also, as soon as Buddhism started to develop in China, the homeland of the Buddha raised the interest and curiosity of Chinese Buddhist monks. Some of them even travelled to India, writing interesting travel accounts, that offer both a glimpse of the Indian monastic world, as well as an intriguing comparison between the Indian experiences of the travelling monks and their Chinese background. Finally, from the eighth century onwards, the so-called ‘rules of purity’, *qing gui* 清規 started to develop in China. While these *qing gui* clearly rely on earlier compilations of disciplinary rules, they also constitute an entirely new phenomenon, with their principal aim being the practical organization of large public monasteries. They also mark the end of a continuous Buddhist influx from India to China.

The above texts can rightly be called the formative corpus of Chinese Buddhist discipline, and it is this corpus that is still often referred to by contemporary masters. In the following, we will discuss what all these basic sources have to say on body movement and sport activities, with a particular focus on how Chinese masters deal with these issues in their respective texts. It is important to note though that all these texts, including traveler accounts, express the ideas of their authors/compilers on how a monastic environment ideally should be. In that sense they are all normative texts. Still, they also refer to objects and practices that were presumably known to authors and audiences alike, and therefore can provide interesting insight into how daily life was meant to be organized in accordance with a normative monastic ideal.

A. Vinaya rules

1. Body movement

1.1. Body movement and health

1.2. Body movement and decency

2. Physical activities: play, games, entertainment and leisure

B. Disciplinary Rules in China

1. Body movement

1.1. Body movement and health

1.2. Body movement, decency and virtue

2. Physical activities: play, games, entertainment and leisure

A. Vinaya rules

As we have seen above, in the early fifth century, four full *vinayas* have been translated into Chinese. Much later, in the beginning of the eighth century, the monk Yijing 義淨 translated large parts of the *Mūlasarvāstivādivinaya*. In the meantime, however, the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, had been strongly stimulated by influential Buddhist masters, such as Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667), and with the help of the government it became, from the eighth century on, the only *vinaya* to be used for ordinations in the Chinese empire.⁷ This turned the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* into the main reference point for monastic discipline in China until today. It is for this reason that in the present research we focus on the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, while comparing it with the other *vinayas* whenever relevant.

When *vinaya* texts discuss body movement and physical activities, they focus on several issues trying to bring them into accordance with monastic ideals. As we will see, body movement is connected to health, decency and gender, while some specific physical activities are linked to games, leisure and entertainment.

1. Body movement

1.1. Body movement and health

Vinaya texts frequently state that body movement is healthy to both the body and the mind. In fact, this is not surprising for a community that sees wandering as a common practice. The Buddha, as well as his disciples, regularly move from one place to another. In addition, they often go walking (*jing xing* 經行)⁸ as a kind of physical and mental exercise. This walking up and down, has, according to the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, five benefits: one is able to endure journeys, one is able to think, one suffers less illnesses, it improves digestion, and one can concentrate much longer (T.1428, p.1005c28-29).⁹ The *Sarvāstivādivinaya* (T.1435, p.371b27-c1) even mentions ten advantages (in two series of five): one becomes healthier; stronger; one does not suffer illnesses; it is good for digestion; and one can concentrate the mind.

⁷ Cf. Heirman, 2002b: 414, 419-423; and 2007: 192-195.

⁸ Skt. *√kram*, intens. *caṅkram*.

⁹ The *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428, p.834b22) further praises walking for its good effect on the body: it brings the body to rest.

Furthermore, one is able to go for walks; one can fight fatigue; one can eliminate wind diseases;¹⁰ one gets rid of diseases of ‘cold’ (*leng* 冷) and ‘heat’ (*re* 熱);¹¹ and one can concentrate the mind.¹² Good effects on digestion are more explicitly mentioned in the Pāli *vinaya* (Vin II, pp.119–120), where, alike bathing, walking exercises are permitted to alleviate discomfort caused by excessive food consumption. Body movement is thus fully accepted in the monastic community, as a beneficial exercise to both body and mind. It is one of the activities done by monastics, alongside meditating, reading, reciting and writing.¹³

The *Dharmaguptakavinaya* refers to several kinds of places designed for walking (*jing xing chu* 經行處). Some places just seem to be quiet spots suitable for this kind of exercise.¹⁴ These walking places are in the open air, and it can thus be necessary to wear a rain robe (T.1428, p.673b19-23). In any case, one should not put on a ceremonial robe (*saṃgha* robe; *seng yi* 僧衣), since grass, insects, dust and water could spoil the robe (T.1428, p.864b16-18). For nuns, such places in the open air (described as places where one walks under trees) can pose a threat, as some bandits might sexually assault them. Therefore, nuns should never go to walk alone. Also, they should never go for a walk in an *araṇya* place (an area away from habitation). This is seen as very dangerous (T.1428, pp.929c25-930a9).

Apart from open walking places, some more firm constructions seem to have been built. The *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428, p.942c9-12) relates how some monks who were walking were constantly annoyed by vicious insects that would not go away and even frightened them. Therefore the monks got the permission to build a kind of

¹⁰ Diseases linked to ‘wind’ can generally be defined as problems relating to anything that circulates in the body (see *Hôbôgirin, Dictionnaire encyclopédique du bouddhisme d’après les sources chinoises et japonaises, Troisième fascicule*, 1974: 251; Zysk, 1998: 92–96, 110–113).

¹¹ Too much cold (connected to phlegm) or heat (connected to bile) causes disease (on the translation of the three diseases of ‘wind,’ ‘cold,’ and ‘heat’ into Chinese, see Salguero, 2010-11).

¹² The terms used in advantage ten (‘one can concentrate the mind’) are exactly the same as in advantage five, probably testifying that two series have been brought together. The *vinaya* further advises to walk straight, or, if necessary, to follow signs drawn on the ground. One should walk neither too quickly, nor too slowly (T.1435, p.422c21-23).

¹³ Walking is frequently mentioned together with meditation exercises (for instance, *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425, p.478a8-9; *Sarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1435, p.417b24). Still, one should avoid disturbing people who sit down to meditate; and make sure not to walk in front of them (*Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425, pp.506c19-507a2). In addition, walking is equally mentioned alongside activities such as reading, reciting or writing texts (see, for instance, *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425, p.510b14-15).

¹⁴ The *Mahīsāsakavinaya* (T.1421, p.137b25-29) specifies that a walking path can be made. It should be straight, in a higher place, and it can be marked. Such a marked path is also mentioned in the *Sarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1435, p.422c21-23). The same *vinaya* (T.1435, p.284a1-4) advises monks to plant trees alongside the path, in order to protect them from the sun and in order to avoid sweating.

terraced platform on wooden pillars. Planks need to be put on top of these pillars to construct a walking path. If deemed necessary to protect oneself from sun, wind and rain, one can even build a roof.¹⁵ In another passage of the same *vinaya* (T.1428, p.938a26-b3), monks are allowed to build a *jing xing tang* 經行堂, a ‘walking hall’, in order to protect themselves against rain, sun and wind. This ‘hall’ can be quite long, with railings made out of rope or bamboo tubes, and with resting places to sit on in case one is tired. The *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* (T.1425, p.412a2-3 and p.543b5-6) further mentions spittoons (*tuohu* 唾壺) to be placed alongside the walking path. These were most probably not placed in a hall though, but rather alongside a marked off path, since they are used to avoid spitting on green (*sheng* 生, ‘living’) grass.¹⁶ Even more complex structures for walking exercises are mentioned in the Pāli *vinaya* (Vin II, pp.119–120).¹⁷ This *vinaya* carefully takes into account the comfort and the safety of the monks: to prevent their feet from becoming painful when pacing up and down, the pacing ground should be level¹⁸; the place should also not be too low to the ground, so that it cannot be flooded by water; it has to be built like a terraced platform, with a staircase leading up to it; for safety reasons, a balustrade needs to be constructed along the staircase; for the same reasons of safety, the platform should also have a railing; and finally, to prevent being bothered by cold and heat, there should be a hall with a well-constructed roof. The platform can be built using bricks, stones or wood.

Interestingly, a short Dharmaguptaka passage further gives the impression that one can walk on different levels, since it says that, when walking on a lower level, one should never preach the Dharma to people walking on a higher level (T.1428, p.712c17-18).¹⁹ This passage shows that walking did not always happen in silence, but

¹⁵ In another place, monks give up a walking spot since it is pestered by poisonous snakes (*Dharmaguptakavinaya*, T.1428, p.834b20-24).

¹⁶ On ‘destroying’ or ‘killing’ grass, see, amongst others, Schmithausen 1991: 23-36.

¹⁷ Also the *Mahīśāsakavinaya* mentions several kinds of constructions: one is a walking path that, in order to keep horses and cows away, can be fenced off, with a kind of barbed fence or a wall; at the entrance, one or two entrance halls (*men wu* 門屋) can be constructed (T.1421, p.167b29-c4); another walking place is called *bu lang* 步廊 (‘stepping corridor’), built to avoid monks having to walk in the open air (T.1421, p.167c11-13).

¹⁸ Also in the *Mūlasarvāstivādaśālinīyā* (T.1442, p.785b16-22), the Buddha advises the path to be level so that one does not hurt one’s feet. Still, one can put broken tiles on the path, in order to avoid moist and insects. Another passage of the same *vinaya* (T.1451, pp.262c15-263a3) allows to put a kind of rugs on the path so that the feet cannot be hurt. These rugs also need to be mended whenever necessary.

¹⁹ This is in accordance with the *śaikṣa* rules (rules on good behavior) 89 and 91 (T.1428, p.712c13-14 and c17-18) that say that one should not teach the Dharma sitting in lower seat to people sitting in a higher seat, or from a lower walking path to people walking on a higher path.

that some teaching could be given at the same time. In any case, disciples often accompanied the Buddha or their teachers when walking. They should do so with due respect, which includes a ban on wearing leather shoes (T.1428, p.847b27-c14).²⁰ Disciples should further walk on the lower levels and leave the better spots to their teachers.²¹

From the above, it is clear that movement, in casu walking, needs to be done in a proper way, with decency and respect. In addition, walking is considered to be beneficial to body and mind. It strengthens concentration and is a good method to either prevent or heal illnesses. How important walking is can be seen from the fact that more and more complex constructions are built in order to facilitate this exercise.

1.2. Body movement and decency

Decency is the main focus of the so-called *śaikṣa* rules, rules on proper behavior. Anyone who transgresses such a rule commits a *duṣkṛta*, ‘a bad deed’.²² In all *vinayas*, several rules on how to walk and sit are listed. They all underscore the exemplary behavior expected from monks and nuns, restricting body movement: monks and nuns should never jump, unless to avoid some difficulties, such as thieves, wild animals or thorns, or when one crosses water or mud.²³ Squatting in a layman’s house is not allowed, since one could easily fall over, displaying one’s body, or even one’s nakedness, which is very shameful and makes people laugh.²⁴ Also entering a layman’s house with one’s arms akimbo is forbidden.²⁵ Monks who do so resemble new married lay people, showing ambition and arrogance. However, inside a monastery, outside of a village and when on the road, it is no problem. In a layman’s

²⁰ On allowed or prohibited footwear, see in particular Heirman, 2016: 414–416.

²¹ Similar guidelines are also given to nuns (*Dharmaguptakavinaya*, T.1428, p.776a18-b18; *pācittika* rule 73).

²² Cf. Heirman, 2002a: 148–149.

²³ *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, *śaikṣa* 9 and 10, T.1428, pp.699c18-700a12, and p.700a13-1. The regulations are enumerated in the list of rules for monks. The chapter for nuns only announces that these rules are identical for monks and nuns (T.1428, p.778b11-12). The rule on jumping is equally mentioned in the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya*, T.1442, p.902a11-12 (*śaikṣa* 22).

²⁴ T.1428, p.700a15-b13, *śaikṣa* 11. See also Pāli *vinaya*, Vin IV, p.189 (*śaikṣa*, *sekhiya* 25); *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, T.1421, p.74b1 (39, 40); *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425, p.403a3-17 (20); *Sarvāstivādinaya*, T.1435, p.135b16-24 (27, 28); *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya*, T.1442, p.902a6-9 (20).

²⁵ T.1428, p.700b14-c11, *śaikṣa* 12 and 13. See also Pāli *vinaya*, Vin IV, pp.188-189 (*śaikṣa*, *sekhiya* 21 and 22); *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, T.1421, p.74a26-28 (29, 30); *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425, p.401a14-27, p.403b15-29 (10, 22); *Sarvāstivādinaya*, T.1435, p.136a1-10 (35, 36); *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya*, T.1442, p.901c28-29, p.902a2-5 (16, 18).

house, one should also avoid swinging one's body.²⁶ It is the behavior of kings and high officials. Similarly, one should not sway the arms.²⁷ This is only allowed when avoiding danger or when crossing water. One can also wave one's hands to signal to a companion that one has difficulties catching up with him. In a layman's house, the body should always be well covered.²⁸ Only when the wind blows away one's clothes, it is no offense. When with laymen, one should not glance to the left and the right.²⁹ This is the behavior of thieves. There is no offense, though, when there is some danger on the road and one needs to run away. Also one's attitude among laypeople is strictly regulated: one should not enter a layman's house with a loud voice.³⁰ Monks who do so resemble a group of brahmans. There is no offense, however, when one is hard of hearing, when one is encouraging someone, when one is distributing food to the poor, or when there is some danger. Finally, one should not enter a layman's house playful and laughing.³¹ This is the behavior of monkeys. Laughing also implies that one shows one's teeth, another indecent thing to do.

All the above regulations concern the relation between monastic members and the lay community. Clearly the reputation of the monastic community is at stake: one should avoid behavior that is seen as arrogant or only fit to high class officials, as well as behavior associated with loud crowds, with thieves, or even with animals. A proper attitude is expected of monks and nuns, and this is expressed through body movement: one should not jump, have the arms akimbo, swing the body or sway the

²⁶ T.1428, pp.700c12-701a12, *śaikṣa* 14 and 15. See also Pāli *vinaya*, Vin IV, pp.187-188 (*śaikṣa, sekhiya* 15 and 16: swing the body; 19 and 20: sway the head); *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, T.1421, p.74a25-28 (19-24: body, shoulders and head); *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425, p.401b2-25 (11, 12: body and head); *Sarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1435, pp.136c1-137a1 (45-50: shoulders, head and body:); *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1442, p.902a19-22, 25-26 (25, 27: body and head).

²⁷ T.1428, p.701a13-b10, *śaikṣa* 16 and 17. See also Pāli *vinaya*, Vin IV, p.188 (*śaikṣa, sekhiya* 17 and 18); *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, T.1421, p.74a27-28 (33, 34); *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425, p.401b26-c11 (13: to enter swaying the arms); *Sarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1435, p.136b19-29 (43, 44); *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1442, p.902a23-24 (26).

²⁸ T.1428, p.701b14-c6, *śaikṣa* 18 and 19. See also Pāli *vinaya*, Vin IV, p.186 (*śaikṣa, sekhiya* 3 and 4); *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, T.1421, p.74a21-22 (11, 12); *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425, pp.399c23-400a10, pp.401c12-402a3 (3, 14); *Sarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1435, p.134a25-b20 (17, 18); *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1442, p.901c18-19 (12).

²⁹ T.1428, pp.701c7-702a4, *śaikṣa* 20 and 21. See also, Pāli *vinaya*, Vin IV, p.186 (*śaikṣa, sekhiya* 7 and 8); *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, T.1421, p.74a28-29 (37, 38); *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425, p.400a11-25, p.402a4-20 (4, 15).

³⁰ T.1428, p.702a5-29, *śaikṣa* 22 and 23. See also Pāli *vinaya*, Vin IV, p.187 (*śaikṣa, sekhiya* 13 and 14); *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, T.1421, p.74b3-4 (47, 48); *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425, pp.400a26-b9, p.402a21-b8 (5, 16); *Sarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1435, p.135b6-15 (25, 26: the *vinaya* advises to enter in silence); *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1442, p.901c18-19 (12).

³¹ T.1428, p.702b1-24, *śaikṣa* 24 and 25. See also Pāli *vinaya*, Vin IV, p.187 (*śaikṣa, sekhiya* 11 and 12); *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, T.1421, p.74b2-3 (45, 46); *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425, p.400b10-26, p.402b9-26 (6, 17).

arms. In some practical situations, exceptions can be allowed though, but there has to be a need, as having to cross water for instance. In the same row of guidelines on proper attitude, we also find rules on the use of speech and laughter. Although speech is certainly allowed, it should be done in a decent way, and not lead to any shameful situations.³² Finally, also improperly displaying parts of the body poses a problem: indecent nakedness makes people laugh, and brings shame to the community. As a result, even squatting is not allowed since one might fall over and improperly show the body. Obviously, all these rules severely limit body movement, let alone physical activities, certainly when lay people are present.

Body movement, decency and gender

For women, more than for men, moving and certainly swaying the body is an act that points to beauty and sexual attractiveness. The *Dharmaguptakavinaya* has a *pācittika* rule that explicitly discusses this issue: “If a *bhikṣuṇī*, in order to look beautiful, walks quickly, swaying her body, she [commits] a *pācittika*.” A *bhikṣu* is said to commit a *duṣkṛta*, a ‘bad deed’.³³ This admonition fits well into the general guidelines for women telling them to avoid any expression of beauty, or even of female shapes, so as not to give rise to any sexual ideas. Female shapes, and particularly the breasts, are thus hidden behind extra robes used to cover the rounding of the breasts so that they do not catch the eye.³⁴

The above clearly shows how beauty, expressed through the shape of the body and body movement, raises suspicion, and women walking quickly and swaying the body, are even accused of resembling prostitutes and women thieves (*Dharmaguptakavinaya*, T.1428, p.777a27). This again severely limits body movement and physical activities, and women will need to be even more careful than men.

2. Physical activities: play, games, entertainment and leisure

As we have seen above, when discussing body movement, several issues come to the fore. These can be daily activities, controlled by strict guidelines, and walking

³² On decent speech in the monastic community, see Heirman, 2009: 80-81.

³³ *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, T.1428, p.777a23-b19.

³⁴ See, for instance, von Hinüber, 1975; Heirman, 2008: 147-151.

exercises, beneficial to body and mind. In addition, however, most people will also be attracted to physical activities of which the usefulness is less clear, such as games, entertainment and leisure. Contrary to walking exercises, these activities receive a much less positive reception in *vinaya* texts.

Monks and nuns can in fact not participate in any kind of entertainment. This is clearly indicated in the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, where in a list of examples of bad behavior attributed to two monks, we find the following (T.1428, pp.596c20-597a1, similarly p.890b25-c3): they cultivate plants and trees, and they wear flowers, asking lay people to do the same; they go to lay families and they sit men and women together, on the same seat, eating from the same bowl, drinking from the same cup and enjoying themselves; they sing, and act; they play an instrument and they blow shells; they make the sound of a peacock or the sound of other birds; they run or walk as a cripple; they whistle, adopt silly positions, or are engaged to make fun.³⁵ Monks showing such behavior commit a *saṃghāvaśeṣa* offense, leading to a temporary expulsion from the *saṃgha*, a harsh measure.³⁶ The reason why the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* condemns this behavior is mainly economic (T.1428, p.597a1-11). The bad monks have namely corrupted some lay donors, and when well behaving monks arrive, these do not receive any gifts, despite the fact that they abide to all rules, and that they walk as they should: they walk one behind the other, lowering the head, and not looking to the right and the left. They do not speak and laugh, and they do not make contact with lay people. But their behavior is strange in the eyes of some donors and so the monks do not receive any food and drinks. Apart from this economic reasoning, it is clear that for the Buddhist community, playful behavior is considered to be morally wrong. To convince the lay people of the moral superiority of the goods monks, the community even sends their best representatives, Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana to the village. The *saṃgha* thus strongly strives to establish a moral standard, banning entertainment and leisure, including physical activities. This is valid for all monastic members. Those who do not comply need to be sanctioned.

³⁵ On this series, see Heirman, 2002a: 432-434.

³⁶ Nuns commit the same offense, for similar bad behavior (*Dharmaguptakavinaya*, T.1428, p.724a9-17).

The same story is also mentioned in the other *vinayas*, and, generally, all versions are very similar.³⁷ All *vinayas* focus on corrupting behavior and the need of a moral standard. Particularly interesting though is the list of bad habits mentioned in the Pāli *vinaya*: apart from the activities listed in the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, it also includes playing and dancing with women³⁸, and a long list of games, such as playing on a chequered board for gambling, playing at dice, playing with a ball³⁹, running, guessing and mimicking, and training wrestling, archery and swordsmanship. Moreover, interesting in the framework of the present research, the Pāli *vinaya* explicitly refers to activities linked to sport and amusement.⁴⁰ As in the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, the monks successfully corrupted the lay people, and good monks could not receive any gifts; and just as in the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, such bad monks need to be severely sanctioned and a good moral standard is to be imposed. In the *Mahīśāsakavinaya* (T.1421, p.22a10), this moral standard is specifically linked to ‘outward signs of exemplary behavior’ (*fan xing zhi xiang* 梵行之相), involving body, speech and mind (T.1421, p.21c17-18).

Games, entertainment, leisure, are seen as morally incorrect. Good monks do not participate in them.⁴¹ This also includes physical activities that are not deemed necessary or useful. They pose a threat to the good reputation of the Buddhist community.

³⁷ Pāli *vinaya*, Vin II, pp.9-13; Vin III, pp.179-186; *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, T.1421, pp.21c11-22c6; *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425, pp.286c16-289c17 (the story is a bit different: the bad monks are criticized by the lay community and no longer receive any gifts; this worries the good monks); *Sarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1435, pp.26b9-27c5 (interesting for our research is that the *Sarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1435, p.26b23) also condemns throwing objects in the air and catching them again); *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, T.1442, pp.705a10-707a16 (in this *vinaya*, both the bad and the good monks do not receive any gifts since the householders lost their faith).

³⁸ The *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, T.1421, p.21c16-17, also mentions that the wicked monks make sensual gestures towards women.

³⁹ *Akkhena kiḷanti* (Pāli *vinaya*, Vin III, p.180), explained by the *Samantapāsādikā* (Vol.III, p.621), a commentary on the Pāli *vinaya* compiled in the fourth or fifth century CE (von Hinüber, 1996: 104), as playing with a ball (*guḷena*).

⁴⁰ The verb used is *vlas*, causative, ‘to sport, to amuse (oneself)’ (Rhys Davids and Stede 1992 [1921-25]: 582, s.v. *lasati*). The activities listed by the Pāli *vinaya* seem to include some kind of competition, sanctioning the use of the term ‘sport’.

⁴¹ Monks and nuns should also not go and see music. This is explained in detail in the chapter for nuns in the several *vinayas*: Pāli *vinaya* (Vin IV, pp.267-268); *Mahīśāsakavinaya* (T.1421, p.97b16-23); *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* (T.1425, p.540b20-c8; still, in case benefactors want to worship the Buddha with dance and music, nuns can help them, providing they do not get attached to the music); *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1428, p.740a27-b23); *Sarvāstivādavinaya* (T.1435, p.342a11-28); and *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, (T.1442, p.1015a23-b23).

B. Disciplinary rules in China

When the *vinayas* were translated into Chinese, they immediately attracted major attention. Seen as the word of the Buddha, Chinese monastics went a long way to implement these rules in their monasteries. In the same period, Mahāyāna Buddhism, with its focus on the concept of *bodhisattva* and its closer connection between monastic and lay Buddhism, quickly gained popularity. Compared to the *vinaya* texts, in Mahāyāna Buddhism, attention for the body continues to grow, parallel to the idea, aptly expressed by Suzanne Mroczek (2007: 33) that “bodhisattvas use their bodies and their heartminds to transform living beings in positive ways.” Virtue thus takes a specific bodily form; virtue is beautiful. This use of the body does not need to be in contradiction with the meditative focus on its impermanence and foulness. On the contrary, as some Mahāyāna authors argue, the human body “is more valuable than a wish-fulfilling gem, but only if it is used in a positive way” (Williams, 1997: 214). In other words, if one does not use the body for noble ends, it remains nothing more than a foul body. Through the body, one can thus give an example, advancing on the path to Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.

The above reasoning easily generates a growing normative attention for decency, virtue and beauty of the body. It is not the only ‘trigger’ of good behavior though. As we will see, also social pressure is an important factor, and in Medieval China this pressure is continuously growing. The controlling role of the imperial government even becomes visible in several civil guidelines, enforcing a socially decent attitude upon monks and nuns. In addition, attitudes towards the body are also influenced by health concerns, in accordance with the attention Chinese medical texts attach to physical activities.

The body as an outward sign of exemplary behavior, controlled by social pressure inside and outside of the monastery and being an important player in health issues, receives a lot of regulating attention. In the following we focus on body movement, and its connection to health and decency, as well as on physical activities associated to games, entertainment and leisure.

1. Body movement

1.1. Body movement and health

Buddhist masters do not usually discuss a connection between every day physical activities and health. A notable exception though is the famous monk Yijing 義淨, who lived in India and South Asia between 671 and 695. He wrote down his experience in a travel account entitled *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan* 南海寄歸內法傳, *Account of Buddhism Sent from the South Seas* (T.2125).⁴² This travel account contains invaluable information on the way Yijing envisages ideal monastic life. When considering the body, he pays particular attention to the link between physical activity and health. Already the title of his discussion on walking makes this very clear: *jing xing shao bing* 經行少病, '[When] walking, [there are] fewer diseases' (T.2125, p.221b21-c9).⁴³ In India, he says, monks and laymen alike have the habit to go for a walk, avoiding noisy places. This is a way to cure diseases and to help digestion. The best time is at noon or when the sun is in the west. One can go for a long walk, out of the monastery, or one can slowly walk in a corridor. Many problems caused by the sedentary life of a monk can thus be solved: swollen feet, a swollen stomach, pain in the arms and the shoulders, and problems with phlegm. Yijing also refers to the Buddha, who also went walking. (Parts) of his walking paths are even venerated in several places in India. Yijing complains though that, contrary to the Buddha and to Indian monastics, monks in his homeland, generally do not practice this healthy activity.

Despite the fact that Yijing reproaches his fellow monks not do engage in any physical exercise, the link between physical activity and health was not at all that strange to the Chinese public. Already in the first centuries BCE, physicians recommended physical exercises for the prevention and cure of disease.⁴⁴ And certainly in Daoist circles, gymnastic exercises were highly praised.⁴⁵ Still, it seems that at least Yijing was not very enthusiastic about the physical efforts of his Chinese fellow monks.

1.2. Body movement, decency and virtue

⁴² For a translation into English, see Li Rongxi, *Buddhist Monastic Traditions of Southern Asia, A Record of the Inner Law Sent Home from the South Seas* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2000).

⁴³ For a translation, see Li Rongxi, 2000: 107-108.

⁴⁴ Shahr, 2008: 140-147.

⁴⁵ See for instance, Needham, 1983: 155-170.

More than health, decency is a matter of concern when Buddhist monastic masters discuss body movement. This is clearly the case of Daoxuan, who already during his lifetime was a very influential master, and whose writings are still considered to be standard interpretations in Chinese Buddhism. As highly respected senior of the Ximing 西明 monastery near the capital Chang'an, Daoxuan wrote several *vinaya* commentaries, and actively promoted Buddhism at the imperial court.⁴⁶ 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 Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T.1804), in which he comments on the *prātimokṣa* rules for monks and nuns. As the title suggests, this is primarily an analysis of the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, but it contains references to and interpretations of many other *vinaya* texts, too. In this commentary (T.1804, p.147a11-14), Daoxuan refers to the exercise of walking (*jing xing* 經行) common in Buddhist monasteries. Relying on the *Sarvāstivādivinaya* (T.1435, p.422c21-23), he advises that one should walk straight, or if not possible, follow signs drawn on the ground. One should walk neither too quickly, nor too slow. Daoxuan equally mentions that this exercise can be either done in a hall, or in a free place.

Such a correct way of walking is equally discussed in greater detail in a widespread, anonymous manual for monastics, entitled *Da biqiu sanqian weiyi* 大比丘三千威儀, *Great (Sūtra) of Three Thousand Dignified Observances of a Monk*, which was probably compiled in the fifth century (T.1470).⁴⁷ It stipulates that one should walk in an open free space, not making any noise. One should thus avoid lifting the feet too high, and so stamping with the feet (T.1470, p.915c18-23). When circumambulating a *stūpa*, more humble behavior is required: one should walk with the head down, without looking to the left and the right, and without talking to anyone (T.1470, p.915b20-22).

A second very instructive manual is the *Jiaojie xinxue biqiu xinghu lüyi* 教誡新學比丘行護律儀, *Exhortation on Manners and Etiquette for Novices in Training* (T.1897), compiled by the aforementioned master Daoxuan.⁴⁸ This manual provides extensive guidelines for new members of the community on a variety of daily matters with the

⁴⁶ For an introduction on disciplinary texts by Daoxuan, see, among others, Yifa, 2002: 23–28.

⁴⁷ Although the colophon to the text presents it as a Han translation by An Shigao (安世高, second century), the *Da biqiu sanqian weiyi* was probably compiled in China during the fifth century (Hirakawa, 1970: 193–196).

⁴⁸ On this text, see Yifa, 2002: 26–28; and 226, note 103, on the attribution of the text to Daoxuan.

aim of integrating newcomers into the (ideal) monastic life. It advises to always walk in a dignified way, without any hurry; and without hanging down the hands and swaying the arms (T.1897, p.873c23-24).

Such appeals to decent behavior also appear in a new genre of rules that started to develop from the eighth century onwards, the so-called ‘rules of purity’ (*qing gui* 清規), which would prove particularly popular among Chan monks. These rules have been updated regularly and have become the standard code for the organization of all Chinese public monasteries, regardless of school affiliation. Correct conduct is a key issue of all these texts, including the way to walk. Hence, monastics should give a good example, as put very clearly in, for instance, the *Ruzhong riyong* 入眾日用, *Daily Life in the Assembly* (W 111, pp.943–947), compiled in 1209 by the Chan monk Wuliang Zongshou 無量宗壽. It says: “Worldly dharmas are [ultimately] identical with supraworldly dharmas, but those who are on pilgrimage [monks] can nevertheless set a precedent for those who are not yet on pilgrimage [the laity].”⁴⁹ In the context of such exemplary behavior, it is stipulated not to run around hastily, but instead to walk slowly (W 111, p. 946b5-6). Such conscious attention to the way one walks, sits, stands or lies down, is well outlined by one of the most influential *qing gui* text, the *Chixiu Baizhang qing gui* 敕修百丈清規 (*Baizhang’s Rules of Purity Revised on Imperial Order*, T.2025), compiled by Dongyang Dehui 東陽德輝 between 1335 and 1343: “If the three forms of karma (i.e., acts of body, speech, and mind) are not well regulated, and if the four manners of conduct (i.e., walking, standing, sitting, and lying down) are not respectfully accomplished, this is not the way for the primary seat official to provide model leadership for the practitioners.”⁵⁰ It cannot be said more clearly: monastics, led by their masters, are urged to give the good example and to live up to the set standards of decent behavior. The way their body moves, stand, sit or lies down mirrors their good or bad acts, and hence their virtue.

2. Physical activities: play, games, entertainment and leisure

Despite the relatively stern control on body movement, the body does not stand still and physical activities are part of monastics’ daily life. Some activities easily get

⁴⁹ W 111, p.943a8-9; translation Foulk, 1995: 462.

⁵⁰ T.2125, p.1146c17-18; translation Ichimura, 2006: 324.

associated to elements of play, games, entertainment and leisure. This is very clear, for instance, when Daoxuan discusses the above mentioned *pācittika* rule on swimming (T.1804, p.85b22-24). He hereby refers to the *Sapoduo pini piposha* 薩婆多毘尼毘婆沙, a commentary on the *Sarvāstivādinaya* translated in the beginning of the fifth century (T.1440, p.557c15-16).⁵¹ The arguments Daoxuan focuses upon give us a good insight into how he perceives swimming, and presumably all physical activities: enjoying oneself in water is harming the respect (*zunzhong* 尊重) due to the Buddha and the Dharma; it goes against dignified behavior (*weiyi* 威儀) and attracts criticism of the world; it has harmful karmic effect; and it makes one lose the right thoughts. Still, he also refers to the exceptions to the rule, as mentioned above: if one learns to float and so waves one's arms, it is no offense (T.1804, p.85c1-2).⁵² Daoxuan's arguments fit very well to the context of Medieval Chinese Buddhist monasteries: it combines the call for decent exemplary behavior in defense of Buddhism, the awareness of lay, including governmental, social pressure and the focus on karmic effects, a prominent feature in Mahāyāna moral precepts.

Such Mahāyāna precepts, commonly called *bodhisattva* rules, saw a growing popularity from the fifth century on. The most influential text is the *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 (T.1484), the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, which in the second of its two fascicles contains a set of fifty-eight precepts. The text has probably been composed in China around the middle of the fifth century.⁵³ It was seen as a Mahāyāna supplement, a guideline for lay people as well as for monks and nuns on their way to enlightenment.⁵⁴ The first ten rules of the *Fanwang jing* are defined as *bodhisattva pārājika* offences (*pusa boluoyi zui* 菩薩波羅夷罪). The offender loses all benefits in his or her actual existence, and will be reborn as an infernal being, a hungry ghost or an animal. If the

⁵¹ Cf. Yuyama, 1979: 8-9.

⁵² Swimming for pleasure was not unknown in China during Daoxuan's time, as nicely demonstrated by some mural paintings in Dunhuang (Li Chingshen et al.: 73, 150-153).

⁵³ It is not sure when exactly the *Fanwang jing* started to play an important role in Chinese Buddhism. According to Groner (1990a: 253-255, 278), it must have been within one or two centuries after its compilation. Huijiao 慧皎 (497-554), the compiler of the *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (*Biographies of Eminent Monks*, T.2059), is said to have made the first commentary on it (Daoxuan, T.2060, p.471b16; Fei Changfang, T.2034, p.100a4-5; Groner, 1990a: 255). The second fascicle (containing the list of precepts) was circulating as an independent text by the end of the fifth century (Groner, 1990a: 253).

⁵⁴ This does not necessarily mean that the traditional *vinaya* rules were always considered to be superior. On the contrary, some ordination ceremonies, such as the one designed by Emperor Wu (r. 502-549) of the Liang dynasty, seem to suggest that the *vinaya* ordination was just a transitory state towards the full perfection of *bodhisattva*-hood (Janousch, 1999: 126-133).

offender is a monk or a nun, he or she loses his or her monastic status.⁵⁵ The ten *pārājika* rules are followed by forty-eight light offences (*qing gou zui* 輕垢罪), all leading to bad karmic effects. One of these offences concerns music and games (T.1484, p.1007b14-20). A disciple should not listen to all kind of instruments, such as shells (*chui bei* 吹貝), drums (*gu* 鼓), horns (*jue* 角), different string instruments all commonly called zither (*qin* 琴, *se* 瑟 and *zheng* 箏), or flutes (*di* 笛). They also should not play all kinds of games, many of them involving chance or gambling, such as *danqi* 彈碁⁵⁶ and *liubo* 六博⁵⁷, *weiqi* 圍碁⁵⁸, games played with chess pieces, but also games such as kickball (*pai qiu* 拍毬) or throwing arrows (*touhu* 投壺)⁵⁹.

It is not surprising in fact to find such a list of activities in a disciplinary Buddhist text. Games, contests and also sport activities were quite fashionable in Medieval China and for lay people as well as for monastics they must have been a common sight. As we see in the *Fanwang jing*, drinking, gambling, music, and intellectual as well as physical games are easily mentioned in the same context. Some games are played by everyone, others, such as polo, are largely an aristocratic practice.⁶⁰ Intermingling of leisure, games, and forbidden pleasure had already been mentioned in *vinaya* texts, but in the *Fanwang jing*, it gets special attention. Most interesting in the context of our present study is the mentioning of a ball game called *pai qiu*, ‘kickball’. The aim of this popular ball game was to keep the ball in the air as long as possible, kicking it with the feet, legs, shoulders, back or head. It was important that the movements were smooth and elegant. One can play such a game

⁵⁵ T.1484, p.1005a18-22. Still, repentance is always possible, even to the extent that a transgressor can be restored to his or her institutional rank (see Kuo, 1994: 56-58; Greene, 2012: 269-291).

⁵⁶ Cf. *Ciyuan*, p.1056; Needham, 1962: 327; von Eschenbach, 1996: 10: a game dating from the Han and the Wei dynasties; it is played by two people with chess pieces; the game probably involved “both throwing the pieces on to the board, and combat moves following this chance placing” (Needham).

⁵⁷ Cf. *Ciyuan*, p.307; Needham, 1962: 327; von Eschenbach, 1996: 11-12: an old gambling game, dating to at least the third century BCE; it is played by two players who each have six chess pieces (six black, six white).

⁵⁸ Cf. *Ciyuan*, p.577 (variant *qi* 棋); Needham, 1962: 319: a chess game that dates back at least to the third century CE; it is played by two players with each 150 pieces; its object is to surround (*wei*) the opposing pieces.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Ciyuan*, p.1222; Needham, 1962: 328; von Eschenbach, 1996: 13: an old game played at parties, dating back to the late Zhou dynasty; the guests by turns throw arrows in a pot; the one with the most arrows is the winner; the loser has to drink.

⁶⁰ See, for instance, Li Jinmei, 2013: 232-233. Some games, especially ball games, were also linked to military exercises (see, for instance, Brinker, 2006: 53-56). This was also the case for polo, popular among the court elite; the object of the game was to hit the ball into the goal of the other team (Liu, 1985: 206-207, 210).

alone or in group.⁶¹ As discussed in detail by Hans Ulrich Vogel, in the Song and Ming dynasties, the game was sometimes praised as an exercise good to body and mind. On the other hand, it also got criticized as an idle occupation.⁶²

Martial arts

The above contains more than enough arguments for Buddhist disciplinary masters to be weary of games, and in the context of our research, of physical activities such as kickball or football: it is linked to leisure, gambling, idleness, all kinds of occupations that can potentially undermine the reputation of the Buddhist community. Still, kickball was also linked to well-being of body and mind, values also mentioned in the most known case of bodily activities conducted by Buddhist monks, martial arts. The practice of martial arts is often linked to the Shaolin monastery, founded in the fifth century in Central Henan. Although martial arts are not the focus of the present paper, they still deserve some attention for their exceptional position. As described in detail by Meir Shahar (2008: 20-52), Shaolin monks resorted to arms at the end of the Sui dynasty and the beginning of the Tang dynasty to serve the (Tang) emperor, disregarding, at least temporarily, the Buddhist prohibition of violence. Doing so, the monks secured their economic and institutional position. Without at least some training, this seems rather hard, and referring to textual evidence, Shahar (2008: 37) concludes that “it is possible, therefore, that medieval Chinese monks –either at Shaolin or in other temples– not only participated in war, but also trained for it.” This kind of fighting is also connected to the consumption of meat, necessary to gain enough strength. In this sense, the monks violate another prohibition, the ban against meat eating. The warfare techniques of the Shaolin monks developed into martial arts, particularly in the Ming and Qing dynasties.⁶³ Martial training became thus connected to the mastery of the mind leading to liberation. As Shahar (2008: 62)

⁶¹ Vogel, 2000: 11-15; Brinker, 2006: 99-102. Medieval China also knows ball games with goals and points to gain, especially from the Tang dynasty on. It is also from the Tang dynasty on that a ball could be filled with air, making it lighter and easier to kick (Vogel, 2000: 21; Brinker, 2006: 83, 88-92).

⁶² Vogel, 2000: 22-30. Women do usually not participate. Women still doing so are said to attract men, also sexually. On the other hand, there are a few indications, such as a bronze mirror dating from the Song period, that some women played football, be it probably not publicly (Vogel, 2000: 24-26; Brinker, 2006: 105-109).

⁶³ The link between warfare, fighting and sport activities is not particular to China. Also in other parts of the world, sport activities and the codes they imply have been used to keep force and violence more and more under control, as discussed by Norbert Elias in a study on sport and leisure (with a focus on England) he wrote together with Eric Dunning (1986: 19-25, and 150-174).

summarizes: “The discipline and dedication that were necessary for the one were equally conducive to the other.” Still, martial arts remain a particular category of physical exercise, open only to specialized monks in well-designed monasteries. Since in our study we focus, on the one hand, on Medieval China, when martial practices were still solely a warfare activity, and, on the other hand, on physical activities open to all monastic members, martial arts are not included in our study. Yet, it remains interesting to notice how physical activity strongly became linked to control of the mind, a strong tool on one’s way to liberation.⁶⁴

Control of body and mind

While martial arts as strong expressions of control of body and mind are restricted to a minority of monastic members, the idea of physical and mental strength as a feature of a virtuous community with a powerful teaching was attractive to many more Buddhists. It has the potential to allow competitive physical activities – ‘sport’ activities, to become acceptable in a Buddhist monastic context. Competition is naturally linked to intensive training of the body and to the overall aim of winning a contest. In that sense, it seems contrary to the basic idea of detachment: although one should take care of the body, one should not see it as a goal; and although some movement is good for body and mind, one should not strive to beat others. Still, being superior to others, physically and mentally, is not absent from Buddhist discourse, and as shown by John Powers, the Buddha himself was seen as a great man, reflecting a strong relation of physical beauty with spiritual accomplishment: “A beautiful body was seen as a reflection of inner qualities that could not be verified by the senses.”⁶⁵ The physical shape of the body can also function as a marker of ethical development, as demonstrated, for instance, by Suzanne Mrozik, who speaks of ‘virtuous bodies,’ often also marked by social status, such as a wealthy family or a high religious position.⁶⁶ When living beings come into contact with such a virtuous religious body – of the Buddha, of a *bodhisattva* or of a member of the monastic community – they are

⁶⁴ This link of body and mind in martial arts is often related to Daoist influence. It certainly appeals to practitioners in both the East and the West. For a discussion, see amongst others, Brown, Jennings and Molle, 2009; 48-50; Ilundáin-Agurruza, 2014.

⁶⁵ Powers, 2009a: 227.

⁶⁶ Mrozik, 2007: 61-81. See also Powers (2009b), who in a study of *jātaka* (birth) stories outlines a strong correlation between virtue and physical beauty. In the context of our research, it is interesting to note, as discussed by Denise Gimpel (2013: 32), that a strong link between inner moral value and its somatic representation is equally characteristic of early Confucianism.

transformed for the better, both physically and morally. Mrozik describes this mechanism as ‘physiomoral’.⁶⁷

In a context of sport competition, also the Buddha, being endowed with an extra-ordinary strong body, can easily show his superiority. Already in his youth, the Buddha was strong, and he knew all arts, among which writing, mathematics, archery and wrestling.⁶⁸ This kind of intellectual and physical strength was appealing also to the Chinese, as clearly displayed, for instance, by the above mentioned master Yijing, who describes his master as a person with very high intellectual skills, who was versed in both Confucianism and Buddhism, and who perfectly mastered all six arts (*liu yi* 六藝; rites, music, archery, horse riding, calligraphy and mathematics) (T.2125, p.231c29). He never got tired of working, he was never idle, and always perfectly showed a correct behaviour when walking, standing, sitting or lying down (the so-called *si yi* 四儀, ‘the four appearances,’ T.2125, p.232b5-6). This is very similar to what John Powers (2009: 228) describes in his discussion on the body in early Indian Buddhist literature: “Similarly, the bodies of his [the Buddha] monastic followers were advertisements for the superiority of Buddhism to its rivals. Portraying monks as young, athletic, physically beautiful, and profoundly attractive to women served to distinguish them from other groups, who are routinely characterized as comprised of mainly old, infirm men who further emaciate and degrade their bodies through unproductive ascetic practices.” While Powers somehow overemphasizes the focus on strength and beauty of Buddhist monks – *vinaya* texts equally contain descriptions of monks who are less strong or of advanced age, his findings clearly show, on the other hand, that a well-kept and strong body was not a Buddhist taboo, not in India, and, as exemplified by Yijing, neither in Medieval China.

Social control

Still, even if various physical activities were condoned by the Buddhist monastic community, one needed to be careful not to be accused of engaging in empty and idle entertainment. Equally important, as we will see below, is to avoid all connection to

⁶⁷ Mrozik, 2007: 62.

⁶⁸ See, for instance, the popular *Fo ben xing ji jing* 佛本行集經 (*Collection of Previous Lives of the Buddha*; translated into Chinese at the end of the sixth century), T.190, p.708b19712a18, that describes how the royal Śākya prince (the later Buddha) wins a competition against many other Śākya men, all striving for the hand of Yaśōdharā.

gambling and games of chance. Such activities could potentially even lead to intervention by the imperial government. This is clearly stated in the *Sōniryō* 僧尼令, *Regulations for Monks and Nuns*, an eighth century Japanese legal text based on (no longer extant) Chinese regulations. Some modern scholars have hypothesized that the *Sōniryō* is based on one Chinese text, called *Daosengge* 道僧格, *Regulations for Daoist and Buddhist Monastics*. The same scholars think, probably mistakenly, that this Chinese text was part of the (no longer extant) civil Tang code issued in 637 by Emperor Taizong.⁶⁹ Be it as it may, it remains clear that regulations for monks and nuns were drawn by official Chinese instances with the aim to impose sanctions upon monks and nuns, especially Buddhist, given the regulations' close relation to Buddhist monastic concepts. Although the original Chinese regulations are no longer extant, we can still get a fairly good idea of their contents from the above mentioned *Sōniryō* 僧尼令, itself part of the *Ryō no Gige* 令義解 (*Commentary on the Administrative Codes*, pp.81-89). The *Ryō no Gige* has been compiled in 833 as a commentary on the Japanese civil code, the *Yōrō ritsuryō* 養老律令 (*Penal Code and Administrative Statutes of the Yōrō Era (717-724)*), written in 718, but only promulgated in 757.⁷⁰ The *Sōniryō* prescribes three possible penalties: *kushi* 苦使, forced labor inside the monastic community, as opposed to *tu* 徒, forced labor on major construction projects or in the state-operated iron or salt mines; *huansu* 還俗, forced return to lay life; and *fu guansi (kezui)* 付官司 (科罪), being referred to the civil authorities for trial.⁷¹

The ninth rule of the *Sōniryō* is of interest to our present research (*Ryō no Gige* 令義解, p.84). It states that monks and nuns shall not perform music or play games of chance under penalty of one hundred days of hard labor. This does not include playing the zither (*qin* 琴) or participating in a game of chess (*qi* 碁). From this, we learn that presumably many of the games enumerated by the *Fanwang jing* were banned to members of the monastic community, since most of these games can be classified as games of chance. Chess (*qi*, possibly referring the quite popular game of

⁶⁹ The so-called *Daosengge* is commonly seen as part of the 637 civil code, the *Zhenguan lü* 真觀律 (*Code of the Zhenguan Era; 627-649*). See, for instance, Ch'en, 1973: 95-96; Weinstein, 1987: 17-18. Still, this might not have been the case (for a most recent discussion on the relation between this list of regulations for monastics, the monastic community and the Chinese state, see Fa Ling, PhD Ghent University, forthcoming).

⁷⁰ Weinstein, 1987: 156. For a translation of the *Sōniryō*, see Sansom, 1934: 127-134.

⁷¹ Weinstein, 1987: 19-20.

weiqi, also mentioned above) is excluded though, presumably because it is considered to be a highly intellectual game, less connected to games of chance. In any case, the problem indeed seems to have been gambling, an activity forbidden to all people of the Tang state as also clearly affirmed in article 402 of the *Tang lü shuyi* 唐律疏義 (*Tang Code with Commentary*), of which the extant edition dates from 737⁷²: “All cases of betting goods and articles in games of chance (*bo xi* 博戲) are punished by one hundred blows with the heavy stick.”⁷³ Interesting in this context, is also information provided by the *Tang liudian* 唐六典 (*Compendium of Administrative Law of the Six Divisions of the Tang Bureaucracy*), a compendium of governmental institutions, compiled in 738.⁷⁴ It punishes monastics who indulge in music and gambling with hard labor.⁷⁵

In sum, it is clear that one needed to be very cautious when engaging in both physical activities and intellectual games. Games often involve gambling and can potentially ruin a family. Also, just as alcohol, a game might not be bad in itself, but it easily leads to bad acts such as stealing and lying.⁷⁶ Still, especially dating from the Tang dynasty, some exceptions were occasionally made for games that show one’s intelligence, particularly chess.⁷⁷ Also some physical activities were allowed, especially walking, and, within very confined limits, martial arts. Mental and physical activities could also be seen as beneficial to both body and mind. A good body is a virtuous body, and vice versa. In this sense, one uses the body to present oneself and, by extension, one’s community.⁷⁸ One shows that one controls oneself and one displays it to society, to the benefit of others. In this way, exemplary behavior becomes more than just restricting oneself to social rules of decency: body and mind in addition become tools to both develop oneself and to guide others to the Buddhist Dharma.

⁷² Wilkinson, 2012: 309.

⁷³ *Tang lü shuyi*, scroll 26, p.524, translated by Johnson, 1997: 466.

⁷⁴ Wilkinson, 2012: 310-311.

⁷⁵ *Tang liudian*, scroll 4, p.102 (see also Ch’en, 1973: 103; Zheng Xianwen, 2004: 155).

⁷⁶ For a discussion on games, see, for instance, Magnin, 1998: 34-36; on alcohol, see, among others, Heirman and De Rauw, 2006: 62-71.

⁷⁷ On chess and some similar games in Buddhist monasticism, see Magnin, 1998: 42-44.

⁷⁸ This focus on oneself is rather than a consciousness of the ‘self’, a consciousness of the ‘use-of-oneseff,’ in very much the same way as how Giorgio Agamben (2016: 53-54) interprets the Roman philosopher Seneca’s discussion on the self: “*The self is nothing other than use-of-oneseff*” (p.54).

Concluding Remarks

Physical activities are part of daily life, and this has not remained unnoticed to disciplinary masters. All normative texts take great care to protect the good reputation of the monastic community. Monastics should hence control their body movements, and strictly remain decent. In this way, they protect the *saṃgha* and the teachings of the Buddha. Social control, inside and outside of the monastery, is thus of utmost importance. Still, body movement is not totally banned. On the contrary, walking is warmly welcomed for health reasons. It strengthens the body and the mind. This utilitarian aspect is not unimportant. It is even essential. As soon as physical activities are linked to ‘useless’ leisure, they are no longer allowed. Even worse is when monastics expose themselves to all kinds of bodily games, entertaining the public. This is strongly rejected, all the more since the community risks to lose donors. Apart from this economic reasoning, it is also very clear that Buddhist disciplinary masters consider this behavior to be morally wrong. It ridicules monastic life and the teachings it symbolizes.

In Medieval China, where Mahāyāna Buddhism became popular around the same time *vinaya* rules were fully introduced, the link between the body and the outward world becomes even more visible. Virtue takes bodily forms and bodily forms express virtue, at least in the ideal normative context. The outlining of social life inside and outside of the monastery is strongly influenced by this virtuous circle. Disciplinary masters firmly advise to always move in a dignified way, protecting the reputation of the *saṃgha* and the values it portrays. In addition, governmental control and, to a lesser extent, attention for health issues increase the pressure on body and bodily expressions. It does not mean that the body remains motionless or heavily restricted in its articulations. On the contrary, one could say that a *bodhisattva* attitude can potentially prompt to use the body for fruitful ends, showing correct behavior to inspire others. This is also the reasoning behind monastics’ participation to games of chess or (particularly in the Ming and Qing dynasties) to martial arts. Not leisure, desire, or greed to win is at stake, or should be at stake, but a beneficial use of the body, committed to guide both oneself and sentient beings towards the Buddhist Dharma. It allows monastics to both physically train their body, and engage in intellectual games. And it still inspires modern masters, of whom

Xingyun is a prime example, to promote sport as an expedient means aiming at bringing people to Buddhism. In all such activities, though, one also needs to balance the benefits, trying to remain within the social standards of monastic life and lay society.

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