On the Sarvāstivādins and Mūlasarvāstivādins

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If a list of Indian Buddhist sects contained in Vasumitra's *Samayabhedoparacanacakra* is to believed, the two most important branches of the 'Elders' (Sthaviras) were the Sarvāstivādins and the Mūlasarvāstivādins (Lamotte, 1988: 530). These two sects are also distinguished in a Mahāsāṅghika list preserved by Tāranātha (identical to list two of Bhavya), where the Mūlasarvāstivādins are listed as an offshoot of Sarvāstivādins (Lamotte, 1988: 536). According to these two lists, it would seem that two separate sects accepted the *sarvāstivāda*– the doctrine (*vāda*) that all things (*dhamma-s*) exist (*asti*) in all (*sarva*) times (past, present and future). In a Sarvāstivādin list of Vinītadeva, however, the Mūlasarvāstivādins are the basic sect of a broader Sarvāstivādin group of sects in which the Sarvāstivādin s have no independent existence (Lamotte, 1988: 545). The Sarvāstivādins are also omitted from a fourfold list compiled by Yi-jing, and since this list (Mahāsāṅghikas, Sthaviras, Mūlasarvāstivādins and Sammatīyas) is based on his travels in India between 671 and 695 AD, one would assume it to be a better historical source than the lists of Vasumitra and Tāranātha (Lamotte, 1988: 544).

Whether or not this is true, other equally reliable historical sources do not confirm the fourfold list of Yi-jing. No mention of the Mūlasarvāstivādins is found in the numerous fivefold lists translated into Chinese from the fourth century AD onwards,[1] and the same is true of Hsüan tsang's census of Indian Buddhism in the seventh century (Lamotte, 1988: 539-44). Moreover, most ancient lists of Indian Buddhist sects do not mention the Mūlasarvāstivādins.[2] The majority view, then, is that the

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[1] This division consists of Sarvāstivādins, Dharmaguptakas, Kāśyapīyas, Mahīśāsakas and Mahāsāṅghikas (Lamotte 1988: 536-37).
[2] A Sthavira list preserved by Tāranātha (Lamotte 1988: 529), a list in the Śāriputraparipṛcchā (Lamotte 1988: 532), a Pāli list (Lamotte 1988: 532), a list in the Mañjuśrīparipṛcchā (Lamotte 1988: 534), list I of Bhavya (Lamotte

Mūlasarvāstivādins had no independent sectarian existence. But it is impossible to say whether this reflects historical fact. Since the various sources present conflicting accounts, the reliability of any one of them cannot be taken for granted; the lists are, as Etienne Lamotte pointed out, a mass of 'pseudo-historical elucrubations' (Lamotte, 1988: 547).

Despite Lamotte's doubts about the historicity of these lists, the general consensus that the Mūlasarvāstivādins had no independent existence is supported by the Indian inscriptions, which only record variations on the word *sarvāstivāda/in* (Lamotte, 1988: 523). But even this evidence is doubtful, since we cannot be sure that the word *sarvāstivāda/in* definitely refers to a sectarian rather than doctrinal affiliation. The only fact that can be inferred from the inscriptions is that some Buddhists, generally from the North-West of India and beyond, referred to themselves as 'Sarvāstivādins'. These Buddhists may have belonged to a Sarvāstivādin or Mūlasarvāstivādin sect, or, if the inscriptions denote a doctrinal rather than sectarian affiliation, to any sect in the vicinity of the inscription. Moreover, Enomoto has pointed out that a late tenth/early eleventh century inscription near Patna refers to the Mūlasarvāstivādins.[3] This suggests the possibility that the other, earlier, inscriptions do not reveal the whole story.

Taken as a whole, the inscriptions and lists of Buddhist sects suggest a number of different solutions to the Sarvāstivādin/ Mūlasarvāstivādin problem: that they were two entirely separate sects, or that one was the source from which the other emerged, or that the two were different groupings within an individual sect, or even that there was only one sect known by two different terms (the terms *sarvāstivādin* and *mūlasarvāstivādin* being equivalent). The last hypothesis is the subject of an important recent article by Fumio Enomoto. His argument that Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin are identical is based on the following interpretation of the term *mūlasarvāstivādin* by Śākyaprabha, an Indian Buddhist author who lived 'at latest' in the eighth century AD:

> Therefore 'Sarvāstivādin' is called 'root (*mūla*),' but other sects are not (called root). … Since the Blessed One

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1988: 534-35), a Sammatīya list (Lamotte 1988: 535) and the list of Sêng yu (Lamotte 1988: 537-38).

[3]   This inscription includes the expression *śrīmato madrarudrasya mūlasarvāstivādinaḥśiṣyas* (Enomoto 2000: 247).

(*Bhagavat*) was extinct (*parinirvṛta*), and other sects arose based on it ('Sarvāstivādin'), it is explained that ('Sarvāstivādin') is called 'Mūlasarvāstivādin' because (it) became their root (*mūla*) (Enomoto, 2000: 240).

From this Enomoto (2000: 241) concludes:

> [T]he 'root (*mūla*) of the other sects is 'Sarvāstivādin,' and hence the latter is called 'Mūlasarvāstivādin.' 'Mūlasarvāstivādin' is identical with 'Sarvāstivādin.'

In other words Śākyaprabha takes *mūlasarvāstivādin* as a descriptive determinative compound: '*Sarvāstivādin*' is the root (of all the other sects). If so, the term *mūlasarvāstivādin* is a gloss on *sarvāstivādin* and does not indicate a separate sect. Enomoto supports this argument by pointing out that the colophons of the Tibetan and Chinese translations of Śākyaprabha's *Prabhāvatī* are inconsistent in their use of the prefix *–mūla*; for him, this means that the prefix had no special meaning.

This evidence certainly supports the notion that there was no difference between Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin, but it is of dubious historical worth. The formation of the Buddhist sects took place up to one thousand years earlier, and it is questionable whether an eighth century Chinese understanding of the term *mūlasarvāstivādin* has any historical significance. Śākyaprabha's interpretation of the term *mūlasarvāstivādin* might reflect a late tradition, and it might even be a guess. Perhaps aware of these problems, and not wishing to depend too much on Śākyaprabha, Enomoto also claims that Yi-jing used the words *sarvāstivāda* and *mūlasarvāstivāda* interchangeably. The important section of Yi-jing's *Nan-hai ji-gui nei-fa-zhuan* (T 2125) is translated by Enomoto (2000: 242-43) as follows:

> *Ārya-Mūlasarvāstivāda-nikāya*, translated into Chinese as *Sheng Gen-ben-shuo-yi-qie-you-bu*, was divided into four sects. … All that are treated in this (work) are based on the 'Mūlasarvāstivāda' sect and they should not be intermingled with things of other sects. (What are treated in) this (work) mostly resemble the *Shi-song-lü*. The three different sects divided from the (Sarv)āsti(vāda) sect – 1. Dharmaguptaka; 2. Mahīśāsaka; 3. Kāśyapīya – are not prevalent in the five parts of India at all. Only in

Uḍḍiyāna, Kuča and Khotan, there are some who practice intermingling (the rules of the three sects). However, the *Shi-song-lü* does not (belong to) the 'Mūla-(sarv) āsti (vāda)' sect, either.

According to Enomoto, this passage says that the Mūlasarvāstivāda sect 'was divided into four sects: Dharmaguptaka, Mahīśāsaka, Kāśyapīya and the Mūlasarvāstivāda itself, the last division being not included in the three divisions' (Enomoto, 2000: 243). It is possible, as Enomoto assumes, that '(Sarv) āsti (vāda) sect' in the fourth sentence is short for 'Ārya-Mūlasarvāstivāda-nikāya' in the first, meaning that Yi-jing did not distinguish two different sects. But even if this is correct, a loose usage of the words *sarvāstivāda* and *mūlasarvāstivāda* does not necessarily mean that Yi-jing did not know two different sects, for it is possible that such interchangeability was permissible where the content makes clear what sect is meant – as could be argued in the present citation. In support of the notion that Yi-jing was aware of two separate sects, it is notable that in the final sentence he mentions the *Shi-song- lü* – the Chinese translation of the Sarvāstivādin Vinaya – and states that it 'does not (belong to) the Mūla-(sarv)āsti(vāda) either'. This seems to prove that Yi-jing was aware of a Sarvāstivādin Vinaya that did not belong to the Mūlasarvāstivādin sect, and it would appear that his use of the prefix *mūla-* in 'Mūla-(sarv)āsti(vāda)' was indeed intended to differentiate Mūlasarvāstivādin from Sarvāstivādin.

Enomoto underplays the importance of this statement. He comments: "Although the *Shi-song-lü* appears quite different from the Vinaya of the 'Mūlasarvāstivādin' sect, the cores of both texts, *Prātimokṣasūtra*, are actually quite similar." (Enomoto, 2000: 244). But it is well known that all the *Prātimokṣa*s of the various extant Vinayas are very close.[4] A remarkable similarity between the Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin *Prātimokṣa* is no reason to identify their Vinayas, and even minor differences between the two would tend to support Yi-jing's statement that the *Shi-song-lü* does not belong to the Mūlasarvāstivādins. This means is that Yi-jing's statement, properly understood, provides no support for the identification of Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin. Perhaps in recognition of this fact, Enomoto (2000: 244) argues that Yi-jing's statement about the *Shi-song-lü* is aberrant:

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4   Lamotte (1988: 165): 'only very small differences can be noted between the various lists.'

The last sentence… has been interpreted to mean that the *Shi-song-lü* belongs to the Sarvāstivādins instead of the Mūlasarvāstivādins. However, this interpretation is contrary to Yi-Jing's identification of the 'Mūlasarvāstivāda' sect with the 'Sarvāstivāda' sect'.

This argument is circular: Enomoto ignores one statement in order to form a theory on the basis of another, and then uses this theory to deny the sense of the statement already ignored. In the end, Enomoto interprets Yi-jing's statement about the *Shi-song-lü* according to Śākyaprabha's understanding of the prefix *–mūla* in the *Prabhāvatī*:

Using the *Prabhāvatī*'s definition that what is called 'Mūlasarvāstivādin' is 'Sarvāstivādin' which is the root (*mūla*) of other sects, this sentence may be translated as follows: 'However, the *Shi-song-lü* does not belong to the '(Sarv)āsti(vāda)' sect, either, which is the root (*mūla* of the division into other sects such as Dharmaguptakas)' (Enomoto, 2000: 244).

It is hard to see how this interpretation is feasible. By synthesising the evidence of Śākyaprabha with that of Yi-jing, Enomoto ends up with a most unlikely interpretation of Yi-jing: that a Sarvāstivādin text (the *Shi-song-lü*) does not belong to the Sarvāstivādins. Relying on the understanding of Śākyaprabha to interpret the statement of Yi-jing would seem, then, to provide a rather bizarre answer to the Sarvāstivādin/Mūlasarvāstivādin problem.[5]

Apart from his reliance on the late understanding of Śākyaprabha, and his attempt to read this into the works of Yi-jing, Enomoto's argument fails to give proper consideration to the crucial fact that distinct Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinayas have been preserved in Chinese and Tibetan translations.[6] The difference between these two Vinayas implies different monastic rules and

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[5]   Skilling (2002: 375) has noted that Enomoto's interpretation of Yi-jing 'seems forced'.

[6]   The Sarvāstivādin Vinaya is preserved in Chinese as T 1435 (Lamotte 1988: 168), and the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya has been preserved in both Chinese (T 1442-51) and Tibetan (Lamotte 1988: 170).

different canons of sacred literature: all that is needed, therefore, to suppose the existence of separate sects. The alternative to this is that one sect could have possessed different books of sacred literature: parallel *Vinaya-piṭaka*s, *Sūtra-piṭaka*s and so on. Such a possibility has been raised by Enomoto and Skilling. Enomoto does not believe that two Vinayas implies two separate sects, and has argued that 'we must assume that there were at least two kinds of *Vinayas* in Sarvāstivādin' (Enomoto, 2000: 248). He therefore proposes that the '*Vinaya* of "Mūlasarvāstivādin" and its related texts should be ascribed to a subsect in "Sarvāstivādin", instead of to the different sect Mūlasarvāstivādins' (Enomoto, 2000: 249).

There are two ways of taking this argument. First, by stating that the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya belonged to a subsect within the Sarvāstivādins, Enomoto could mean that the Mūlasarvāstivādins were an offshoot sect that never quite severed its links from its parent sect, the Sarvāstivādins. Second, by stating that there were two Vinayas within the Sarvāstivādins, Enomoto could mean that one and the same sect transmitted different collections of sacred literature, e.g. parallel *Vinaya-* and *Sūtra-piṭaka*s, with the implication that there were different literary traditions within an individual Buddhist sect. If this were true, it this would go 'against the prevalent view that one sect had only one *Vinaya*', as Peter Skilling has pointed out (Skilling, 2002: 375). He has added to this argument by pointing out that 'we now have several divergent versions of the Sarvāstivādin *Prātimokṣa*', (Skilling, 2002: 375). and that there is more than one Sarvāstivādin *Madhyamāgama* (Skilling, 2002: 375).

It seems to me that both forms of this argument are misconceived. The notion that the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya belonged to a subsect of the Sarvāstivādins depends on proving that there are striking similarities between the two; a close relationship between the two must be shown. Enomoto points out that both Vinayas are 'different developments of a single prototype', (Enomoto, 2000: 249). But this is hardly convincing for the same is true of all the different Vinayas. Unless such similarities between two separate Vinayas are remarkable and particular to those Vinayas, they do not imply a close relationship between the groups to whom they are ascribed. Given the differences between the Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinayas, and the fact that the

Sarvāstivādin Vinaya is closer to other extant Vinayas,[7] it is unlikely that the Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinayas were parallel Vinaya developments within a single sect. On the contrary, it is more likely that they represent separate developments of an original Vinaya by groups that separated very early in the history of Indian Buddhism.

The other alternative is that a single sect transmitted parallel collections of sacred texts. Although this is an intriguing possibility, it seems to me unlikely that a single sect could have transmitted two books of monastic rules. This was the view of Bareau,[8] and is supported by Gombrich's point that a Buddhist monk 'can only remain in full fellowship' with others monks who possess the same *Prātimokṣa* and take part in the same fortnightly *poṣadha* ceremonies (Gombrich, 1988: 111). Two different Vinayas implies distinct *Prātimokṣa*s, and distinct *Prātimokṣa*s implies separate *poṣadha* ceremonies in which these *Prātimokṣa*s are recited and monastic faults confessed. In short, different monastic rules implies different ceremonial practices, and it is not feasible to propose that different monastic ceremonies could be subsumed within a single sect; such differences are, in fact, indicative of separate sects. Skilling's point that 'we now have several divergent versions of the Sarvāstivādin *Prātimokṣa*' (Skilling, 2002: 375) does not alter this fact, and does not mean that one sect had a number of different Vinayas. The different Sarvāstivādin *Prātimokṣa*s probably indicate that more than one Sarvāstivādin sect existed in the history of Buddhism in India and central Asia; it is more likely that they were sects who branched off from the original Sarvāstivādins (i.e. the sect whose Vinaya was translated into Chinese), or perhaps even different monastic lineages that later on adopted the *Sarvāstivāda* as their formal dogmatic position. The same applies to the fact, pointed out by Skilling, that there is more than one Sarvāstivādin *Madhyamāgama* (Skilling, 2002: 375). It is theoretically possible that one Sarvāstivādin sect transmitted different versions of the same text, by preserving various manuscripts in their monastic libraries, but unless these can be related in time and place it is more likely that offshoot Sarvāstivādin sects developed their individual canons of sacred literature and yet continued to use the same sectarian name. Furthermore, if a single sect held different versions

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[7]   See p.256 below.

[8]   Bareau (1955: 154): 'il est tout à fait improbable, et même impossible, qu' une même secte ait possédé simultanément deux Vinayapitaka différents.'

of the same text, it would seem to violate the principle that early Buddhist Sūtras are the word of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*), for different recensions implies different and even contradictory versions of the same text.

To be sure, in cases where different versions of a single text are subsumed under one sectarian name, the burden of proof rests on those who assume that this name refers to a single sect. It must be shown how a single sect could have e.g. different Vinayas despite different sets of monastic rules – two versions of the Madhyamāgama, for example – despite the challenge to the authenticity of Buddhist scripture this poses. As I have said, evidence relating such texts in time and place is vital.

Whatever the sectarian status and relationship of offshoot or later Sarvāstivādin groups such as the central Asian Sarvāstivādins, it is hard to doubt that at an earlier date the Sarvāstivādins and Mūlasarvāstivādins were distinct sects who transmitted their own Vinayas. The Sarvāstivādin Vinaya was translated by Kumārajīva into Chinese in 404 AD, (Lamotte, 1988: 168) whereas the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya was translated into Chinese by Yi-jing between 700 and 712 AD, and into Tibetan in the ninth century (Lamotte, 1988: 170). Despite the late date of the translation of the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya, there are good reasons for supposing a much earlier text. In his translation of the *Mahāprajñā-pāramitopadeśa* (402-406 AD) (Frauwallner, 1956: 26), Kumārajīva shows that he was aware of another Vinaya tradition, which he termed the 'Vinaya of Mathurā':

> "(The Vinaya) comprises, to say it briefly, eighty sections. Moreover, it consists of two parts. The first one, the Vinaya of Mathurā, includes also the Avadāna and Jātaka and comprises eighty sections. The second part, the Vinaya of Chi-pin (Kaśmīr), has rejected the Jātaka and Avadāna; it has accepted only the essentials and forms ten sections. There is, however, a Vibhāṣā in eighty sections, which explains it" (Frauwallner, 1956: 26-7).

As Lamotte has pointed out, Kumārajīva was taught the Sarvāstivādin Vinaya by the Kaśmīrian master Vimalākṣa in Kučā, (Lamotte, 1988: 169) and there can be no doubt that what he calls the Vinaya of Kaśmīra is the Sarvāstivādin Vinaya. According to Frauwallner (1956: 27) the Vinaya of Mathurā can be identified with the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya for a very simple reason:

"It is well known that in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* the Hīnayāna is represented by the Sarvāstivādin school; it seems therefore plausible to identify the two Vinayas there cited with the two works of this school that have come down to us, viz. the Vinaya of the Sarvāstivādin and of the Mūlasarvāstivādin".

Although this identification is perhaps simplistic, Frauwallner's claim is supported by Gnoli (1978: xix) who has pointed out that the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya is repeatedly cited in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*. If so, we can suppose that the extant Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya is the Vinaya of Mathurā, and that the Sarvāstivādin/Mūlasarvāstivādin problem goes back to the relationship between the monastic fraternities of Kaśmīra and Mathurā. What was this relationship? Frauwallner (1956:40) argued that the Sarvāstivādins of Kaśmīra were founded by the ancient Buddhist missions of Aśoka, whereas the Mūlasarvāstivādins were an independent sect formed much earlier on:

"They were at first two independent communities of different origin. Mathurā is an ancient Buddhist zone and its community goes back at least to the times of the council of Vaiśālī. Gandhāra and Kaśmīra were converted at the time of Aśoka, starting from Vidiśā. Later on both communities grew into one school through their accepting of the theories of the philosophical-dogmatic Sarvāstivāda school; but they never completely lost their individualities".

According to this theory, the community of Kaśmīr (and Gandhāra) was one of a number of sects founded through the Aśokan missions (c. 250 BC) (Frauwallner, 1956: 1-23); the other Hīnayāna sects founded in this way were the Theravādins of Sri Lanka, the Dharmaguptakas, Mahīśāsakas, Kāśyapīyas and Haimavatas.[9] The notion of a common origin of these missionary sects is suggested not only by compelling epigraphic and literary evidence,[10] but also a number of similarities between the extant Vinayas of these sects: according to Frauwallner (1956: 38) the

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[9]   Of these sects, only the Pāli, Sarvāstivādin, Dharmaguptaka and Mahīśāsaka Vinayas survive (Lamotte 1988: 165).

[10] On the Aśokan missions, see Wynne (2005: 48-59). Cousins (2001: 169) has commented that the tradition of the Buddhist missions in the third century BC must 'have *some* historical basis'.

differences between these extant missionary Vinayas (Sarvāstivādin, Theravādin, Dharmaguptaka and Mahīśāsaka) and the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya show that the latter represents 'an independent older branch of the Sthavira'.

This theory was initially disputed by Etienne Lamotte. Like Enomoto, Lamotte (1988: 178) argued that the Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinayas were different versions of one text, although he believed that the latter was a version of the former completed at a later date in Kaśmīr:

> "[The Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya] did not originate from an old Buddhist community established in Mathurā from the first century of Buddhism – as E. Frauwallner claims (p.37) – but from an immense compendium of discipline which was closed very much later and was probably compiled in Kaśmīr in order to complete the *Sarvāstivādin Vinaya*. When, in the passage studied above, Kumārajīva speaks of a 'Vinaya in 80 sections from the land of Mathurā' he has in mind, not the *Mūlasarv. Vin.*, but the ancient Vinaya of Upāli which was finally preserved by Upagupta in Mathurā".

This is probably not the most obvious way to interpret Kumārajīva's statement (in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*) on the Vinayas of Mathurā and Kaśmīra. It is more likely that Kumārajīva's opening sentence ('(The Vinaya) comprises, to say it briefly, eighty sections') refers to the ancient Vinaya of Upāli, whereas the following comment on the Vinaya of Mathurā is a reference to a Vinaya of a particular sect. Indeed it is unlikely that Kumārajīva was comparing the Vinaya of Kaśmīra with the ancient Vinaya of Upāli; a comparison between two contemporaneous texts is surely to be understood. Moreover, Lamotte's claim that the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya was 'an immense compendium of discipline… probably compiled in Kaśmīra in order to complete the Sarvāstivādin Vinaya' is problematic, since he also claimed that this 'immense compendium of discipline' is in fact the Vibhāṣā on the Vinaya of Kaśmīra in eighty sections mentioned by Kumārajīva ('…There is, however, a Vibhāṣā in eighty sections'):

> "Although the sources are lacking in precision in this respect, that Vibhāṣā, also written in Kaśmīr, must doubtless be identified with the voluminous *Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya* (T 1442-51) which we have analysed above" (Lamotte, 1988: 174).

Once again this does not seem to be the most obvious interpretation of Kumārajīva. It is unlikely that Kumārajīva termed the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya a 'commentary' (*vibhāṣā*), since that would require that he confused two distinct genres of sacred literature. Moreover, Gnoli has pointed out that the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya was compiled much earlier than Lamotte supposes (Gnoli, 1978: xix), and can be taken back at least to the time of Kaniṣka (c. 127 AD).[11] If so, it is less likely to be a reworking of the Sarvāstivādin Vinaya and more likely to be an independent work.

One final argument can be directed against Lamotte's theory. Lamotte did not explain why a later compilation of the Sarvāstivādin Vinaya should have been termed the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya. Logic would suggest, surely, that the prefix *mūla-* would have been used for the earlier Vinaya (it being the 'root' or 'source' text), in which case it would have been applied to what has been transmitted as the Sarvāstivādin Vinaya.

The arguments of Enomoto and Lamotte do not convince. Frauwallner's argument that the *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* used Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin sources is hardly conclusive, admittedly, but his identification of what Kumārajīva calls 'the Vinaya of Kaśmīra' with the Sarvāstivādin Vinaya appears sound, and his identification of what Kumārajīva calls the 'Vinaya of Mathurā' with the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinayas has been strengthened by Gnoli (Frauwallner, 1956: 27). Frauwallner also argued, somewhat convincingly, that the extant Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya includes a large amount of fables, and therefore corresponds to Kumārajīva's description of the Vinaya of Mathurā (Frauwallner, 1956: 27). Against this theory, however, it must be noted that some passages in the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya mention Kaśmīr and the North-West, and this suggests that the Mūlasarvāstivādins existed there in relatively early times.

Frauwallner discounted this textual evidence. He argued that the passages on Kaśmīra were interpolated into the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya at a later date, and that the internal evidence of this text instead shows a strong connection with Mathurā (Frauwallner, 1956: 27-31). For example, the account of the patriarchs contained in the *Kṣudrakavastu* of the

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[11]   Falk (2001: 130): 'If we accept the dropped hundreds then *meṣasaṃ krānti* of
        127 AD is the real starting-point of the Kaniṣka era.'

Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya describes how Ānanda, before he entered his Nirvana, entrusted the Teaching to Śāṇavāsa and informed him that his disciple would be Upagupta. In the meantime, however, Madhyāntika is said to have flown through the air with five hundred disciples in order to witness the final Nirvana of Ānanda, after which Ānanda entrusted him with the custody of the Teaching and the task of converting Kaśmīra (Frauwallner, 1956: 29-30). According to Frauwallner, the episode containing Madhyāntika appears abruptly and interrupts the natural flow of the narrative. Moreover, the story creates the problem that two patriarchs – Madhyāntika and Śāṇavāsa – are said to exist at the same time. One of them must be a fraud, and Madhyāntika is the most likely candidate:

> "Śāṇavāsa is carefully introduced in the narrative. Firstly the prophecy of Mahākāśyapa singles him out. Then we are told of his admission into the Order. And only then he is entrusted by Ānanda with the custody of the Teaching. In the same way the later appearance of Upagupta is prepared. Madhyāntika, on the contrary, appears quite suddenly and abruptly; and after he has fulfilled his task, he vanishes again, without us hearing anything further about him. The superficiality of the interpolation is quite evident. Moreover, the Madhyāntika episode could be safely expunged, without the context suffering in any way thereby: Ānanda has entrusted the Teaching to Śāṇavāsa, has prophesied Upagupta as his successor, betakes himself to the Gaṅgā and enters there Nirvāṇa. Then the tale goes on quite naturally to relate how Śāṇavāsa consecrates Upagupta as a monk and hands over the teaching to him".

We come thus to the conclusion that the episode of Madhyāntika and of the conversion of Kaśmīr represents a late interpolation in the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin (1956: 30-31).

Frauwallner (1956: 30-31) also argued that the long section on the Buddha's travels in the North-West of India in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* is a later interpolation into the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya. In this section of the text the Buddha journeys with Ānanda to Rohitaka, but then summons the Yakṣa Vajrapāṇi to travel 'through Gandhāra as far as Uḍḍiyāna'. Upon his return to Rohitaka Ānanda is surprised to learn that the Buddha has just been to the

North-West, a fact which suggests that the journey with Vajrapāṇi was interpolated:

> The sudden interruption of the journey, the visit of the North-West by marvellous means in the company of a supernatural being, and then the continuation of the earlier journey, all this points, as clearly as it ever can be, to a later interpolation. But if we expunge that part of the journey which leads to the North-West in the company of Vajrapāṇi, then all the important places visited by the Buddha on his way lie on the upper course of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā, i.e. within the range of the community of Mathurā' (Frauwallner, 1956: 32).

The argument that the passages in the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya concerned with Kaśmīr were added at a later date is convincing. But does this mean that the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya can be identified with Kumārajīva's 'Vinaya of Mathurā'? It depends on whether the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya includes the 'church history' of Mathurā, as claimed by Frauwallner. This is not so straightforward.

The connection between Śāṇavāsa/Upagupta and Mathurā is firm – legend has it that they are the local saints of Mathurā[12] – and so the internal evidence of the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya would appear to relate it to Mathurā. But a number of other North Indian sources contain the list of five patriarchs including Upagupta. Lamotte (1988: 695-98) mentions six such sources which contain this lineage (Kāśyapa → Ānanda → Madhyāntika → Śāṇavāsin → Upagupta). Although this lineage was not accepted by the Mahāsāṅghikas or Theravādins,[13] its wider existence suggests that Upagupta was thought to be a patriarch of the North Indian Buddhist tradition in general. If so, it is possible that the inclusion of this lineage in the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya reflects a general northern tradition, and this would imply that there is no close relationship between the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya and the ancient Buddhist community of Mathurā. Against this, a strong argument

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[12] This much is clear from Strong's study of the Upagupta legend, based on 'Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin texts of the avadāna type' (Strong 1992: 9).

[13] Lamotte (1988: 212) points out that this list of patriarchs does not appear in the Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya. For the Theravādin list of masters, see Lamotte (1988: 203-05).

can be made that this list of patriarchs originated in the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya.

As we have seen, Frauwallner argued that the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya breaks down into different strata, and that the stratum including Madhyāntika's mission to Kaśmīr was not in this text's original account of masters. If this is correct, the lineage of five masters (Kāśyapa → Ānanda → Madhyāntika → Śāṇavāsin → Upagupta) is artificial and we can see its construction in the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya. This implies that the list of five masters originated in the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya, a text which originally contained the material concerned with the 'church history of Mathurā'.[14] In other words, this Vinaya originally belonged to the Mathurān community and it was from its later interpolations on Madhyāntika journey to the North-West that the list of five patriarchs originated.

This solution merely begs further questions, however: what was the relationship between the Mathurān community and the Sarvāstivādin community of Kaśmīr? And how did the Mathurān community come to refer to themselves as 'Mūlasarvāstivādins'? With regard to the first question, Lambert Schmithausen (1987: 379) has claimed that the two groups came into 'very close contact' at some early point:

> "[T]here are a couple of facts which cannot be denied any more: The first fact is that there must have been, at a certain stage of development at least, a very close contact between the two groups, this contact being documented by many common traits of their canonical texts distinguishing them both from other schools. The second is that the Mūlasarvāstivādins not only had a Vinayapiṭaka but also a Sūtra- and a Kṣudrakapiṭaka peculiar to them and different not only from those of the Central Asian Sarvāstivādins but also from those of the Indian Vaibhāṣikas".

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[14]   Frauwallner (1956: 32 n.2) also pointed out that 'The older portion of the [Buddha's] journey was created at the time of the compilation of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin within the community of Mathurā, because the travel account in the corresponding section of the Vinaya of the other schools refers to the narrow Eastern territory, to which the range of view of the original community was limited.'

The very name 'Mūlasarvāstivādin' supports the notion of a 'very close contact' between the two groups. The use of the prefix *mūla-* must have been used by the Mathurān community as part of a claim that they were the original or 'root' Sarvāstivādin group. But a monastic group would not have made such a claim if they were the only sect who professed a particular philosophy – if the Mathurān community were the only *sarvāstivādin* sect, their originality would not have been in question. The claim to be the original or 'root' *sarvāstivādin*s only makes sense, therefore, if another local group had similarly identified themselves as *sarvāstivādin*s. Thus the term *mūlasarvāstivādin* probably arose in the context of sectarian rivalry: the sect who used it argued that they were the original *sarvāstivādin* group. The name 'Mūlasarvāstivādin' therefore suggests that this group were in close contact with another Sarvāstivādin group. Furthermore, it suggests that the initial relationship between the Buddhist communities of Kaśmīra and Mathurā was one of dispute. How did this close contact and dispute come about? Frauwallner (1956: 37n.1) believed that it was brought about by an expansion of the Sarvāstivādins of Kaśmīr towards Mathurā:

> "[T]he philosophical-dogmatic… Sarvāstivādin school has gone through all the important stages of its development in Kaśmīra and the neighbouring countries, which are accordingly stated by tradition to have been their citadel. Thence it spread to the bordering regions and thus apparently came also to Mathurā".

This explanation seems to depend on the assumption that the area in which most of the documented *sarvāstivāda* development occurred – Kaśmīr and the far North-West – was the area from the idea spread. However, although there is abundant evidence connecting the *sarvāstivāda* to Kaśmīr and Gandhāra,[15] there is no compelling evidence that the Sarvāstivādins of Kaśmīr spread to Mathurā. Moreover, an alternative explanation of sectarian contact is provided by the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya.

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[15] Willemen (1998: 82) notes that Dharmaśreṣṭhin, who composed the *Abhidharmahṛdaya* (probably in the first century BC) was from Bactria, and that Kātyāyanīputra, to whom the *Jñānaprasthāna* is ascribed (also probably in the first century BC), was from Gandhāra. On this point, also see Willemen (2001: 163).

Frauwallner did not develop his own argument that Kaśmīrian interpolations are found in the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya, and indeed brushed over the significance of this fact.[16] But the most likely explanation of these interpolations, surely, is that the Mūlasarvāstivādins of Mathurā expanded or migrated to Kaśmīra and wished to legitimise their status there by claiming an ancient connection through Madhyāntika. This suggests that contact between the two groups was caused by a Mathurān expansion towards Kaśmīr. If Frauwallner was correct in believing that the interpolations in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya were made at between 150 and 300 AD (Frauwallner, 1956: 36), this is the likely date of the Mathurān migration. But if Gnoli's (1978: XIX) dating is correct, and the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya can be taken back to the time of Kaniṣka, we should probably imagine that this migration occurred in the first century AD.

If a Mathurān expansion to Kaśmīra in the first century is the most likely explanation of the two groups' ancient contact, what then of the term *mūlasarvāstivādin*? I have already mentioned that the prefix *mūla-* suggests some sort of inter-sectarian conflict. This prefix is in fact most peculiar, being unique as a sectarian name derived from a philosophical perspective: although it was not unusual for Buddhist schools to be known by their foremost doctrine, e.g. the Sautrāntikas, the Vibhajyavādins, the Prajñaptivādins, the Lokottaravādins and so on, there are no groups such as the Mūla-Lokottaravādins or Mūla-Prajñaptivādins. Nevertheless, the use of the prefix *mūla-* in a sectarian name is not unprecedented. According to the ancient lists, the prefix *mūla-* is found in the names of two Buddhist sects: a Sthavira list refers to the Mūlamahāsāṅghikas and Mūlasthaviras,[17] a Sammatīya list refers to the Mūlasthaviras[18] and a Mahāsāṅghika list mentions to the Mūlamahāsāṅghikas.[19] This evidence is important but historically flawed: it is unlikely that there were ever any sects with such names, and the prefix *mūla-* in these cases is probably a

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[16]   Frauwallner (1956: 37 n.1): '[H]ow it happened that the mentions of Kaśmīr were introduced into the texts of the Mathurā school is an interesting question. But its discussion would carry us far beyond the limits of the present investigation.'

[17]   For this Sthavira list of Tāranātha, see Lamotte (1988: 529).

[18]   This is list three of Bhavya, identical to list III of Tāranātha (Lamotte 1988: 535).

[19]   This list is also reproduced by Tāranātha (Lamotte 1988: 536).

hermeneutic device that indicated a basic Mahāsāṅghika or Sthavira grouping from which other sects developed. In other words, the prefix was used in these lists with the benefit of hindsight in order to distinguish the basic groupings that were the historical source of other, offshoot sects.

Despite this pseudo-historical usage of the prefix *mūla-*, we can see that Indian Buddhists used the prefix *–mūla* in sectarian names to indicate a sectarian source of other Buddhist groups. If this understanding is applied to the term *mūlasarvāstivādin*, we have two possible interpretations of the term. First, it could be that the Mathurān group used it to indicate that they were the original owners of the *sarvāstivāda*, i.e. that they were the original Buddhist group who developed the doctrine that all things exist in all times. Second, the term might indicate that the Mathurān community believed they were the group from whom the Sarvāstivādins of Kaśmīra originated.

There is some evidence that the community of Kaśmīra originally accepted a different philosophical perspective. The philosophical orientation of the almost all the missionary schools – the Theravādins, Dharmaguptakas and Mahīśāsakas at least – seems to have been *vibhajyavādin*,[20] a fact reflected in sectarian lists of Sammatīya and Mahāsāṅghika origin (Lamotte, 1988: 535-36). Of this group of missionary sects, the community of Kaśmīra seems to have been unique in developing a *sarvāstivādin* philosophical perspective. Indeed the notion of *sarvāstivāda* is denied in the *Kathāvatthu* (I.6), a Theravādin book of the *Abhidhammapiṭaka* said to have been composed by the same Moggaliputta Tissa who played an important role in the Buddhist missions of the third century BC (Lamotte, 1988:272-3). Furthermore, the Sarvāstivādin *Abhidharma* has much in common with the Theravādin *Abhidhamma*, as Frauwallner has shown;[21] a common origin must be assumed, followed by a lengthy period of philosophical development during which the community of Kaśmīra developed their *sarvāstivādin* perspective; as Frauwallner (1956: 38) has pointed out, it seems that 'school formation [the development of a distinct philosophical

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[20]   The term *vibhajyavādin* means 'those who make distinctions (as to what) exists'. I am grateful to Lance Cousins for this definition.

[21]   Frauwallner (1995: 37): 'The canonical works of the Abhidharma of the Sarvāstivādin contain largely a transmitted heritage of material from early times. Much of this was held in common with the Pāli school.'

perspective] took place later and followed other lines than the foundation of the communities [i.e. sects]'. This evidence might suggest, then, that the community of Kaśmīra originally accepted a *vibhajyavādin* rather than a *sarvāstivādin* perspective, and this might make sense of the claim that the Buddhist community of Mathurā claimed to be the Mūlasarvāstivādins – perhaps they really were the original sect in which the *sarvāstivāda* was developed, and from which the Kaśmīrian community borrowed. But this is unlikely, for there is abundant evidence suggesting a long development of the *sarvāstivāda* within the community of Kaśmīra, and no evidence suggesting a comparable development in the Mathurān community.

Frauwallner believed that the *sarvāstivāda* was developed in the far North-West from 'the six works of the Abhidharma of the Sarvāstivādin. The decisive steps was taken by Kātyāyanīputra with the composition of the *Jñānaprasthāna*, which was written, according to tradition, in the Tāmasavana Vihāra in Uḍḍiyāna'.[22] At a later date the commentarial work on this text culminated in the composition of the *Mahāvibhāṣaśāstra* at a council under the aegis of Kaniṣka.[23] In contrast to this venerable doctrinal history, there is no comparable evidence for the development of the *sarvāstivāda* within the community of Mathurā, since the Mūlasarvāstivādin literature contains only one *mātṛka* (Frauwallner, 1956: 39). If the *Mahāvibhāṣaśāstra* was composed at a council under the aegis of Kaniṣka, it would seem that the serious thought had been given to the *sarvāstivāda* in Kaśmīra and beyond well before the first century AD, and certainly before the arrival arrival of the Mathurān community in Kaśmīra. This suggests that the credit for the elaboration of the *sarvāstivāda* should probably go to the ancient Buddhist community of Kaśmīra.

If there is no evidence for an early connection of the *sarvāstivāda* and Mathurā, and indeed significant evidence suggesting otherwise, it seems unlikely that the Mathurān community would have claimed to be the intellectual owners of the

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22   Frauwallner (1956: 39). According to Willemen (1998: 86), 'it would be reasonable to place Kātyāyanīputra in the first century B.C.'

23   Frauwallner (1956: 39). Bareau (1955: 132) reckoned that the Mahāvibhāṣā of Vasumitra can be dated to around 200 AD. These dates should probably be moved back by a century or so if the beginning of the Kaniṣka era is to be dated to 127 AD (see n.49 above). According to Willemen (1998:89) the Mahāvibhāṣā was written in the second century 'shortly after Kaniṣka'.

sarvāstivāda. They probably did not claim to be the 'Mūlasarvāstivādins' in the sense of the sect from whom the *sarvāstivāda* originally arose or was developed. If it is unlikely that the Mathurān community argued that the *sarvāstivāda* originated in their circles, or that they were the sect that was associated with it from the earliest times, did they argue that they were the 'Mūlasarvāstivādins' in the sense of the sect from whom the Sarvāstivādins of Kaśmīra arose? Some evidence contained in the Chinese Buddhist literature suggests this. It points to a Vinaya dispute between the Mathurān and Kaśmīrian communities, according to which the term 'Mūlasarvāstivādin' can be understood as a Mathurān polemic against the Vinaya tradition of Kaśmīra. In his *Ch'u san tsang chi chi*, Sêng yu (444-518) reports on the Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin traditions of Kaśmīr as follows:

> In the past, Mahākāśyapa held the Baskets of the Law. He transmitted them to Ānanda and so on down to the fifth master Upagupta. Originally, the [Vinaya-] Piṭaka consisted of 80 recitations, but since later generations had weak faculties (*mṛdvindriya*) and could not learn it, Upagupta reduced it to 10 recitations (Lamotte, 1988: 175).

If Sêng yu was one of the Chinese scholars who formulated the 'Kaśmīrian [Vinaya] tradition of Sarvāstivādin and Mūla-sarvāstivādin origin',[24] as Lamotte (1988: 174) claims, this reference to a Vinaya in eighty sections connected to Upagupta is probably a reference to the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya. If so, this statement looks like a fragment of an old Mūlasarvāstivādin polemic against the Sarvāstivādin Vinaya of Kaśmīra – what Sêng yu calls the Vinaya in 'ten recitations'. The claim that Upagupta simplified the original Vinaya to 'ten recitations' for those with 'weak faculties' is effectively a claim that the Sarvāstivādin community is an inferior offshoot of the Mūlasarvāstivādins. Perhaps a response to this sort of criticism is seen in the statement of Kumārajīva (344-409) mentioned earlier:

> [T]he Vinaya of Chi-pin (Kaśmīra), has rejected the Jātaka and Avadāna; it has accepted only the essentials and forms

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[24]   Lamotte (1988: 174).

ten sections. There is, however, a Vibhāṣā in eighty sections
Frauwallner (1956: 26-7)

The peculiar thing about this statement is that there is no
need to mention 'a Vibhāṣā in eighty sections' on the Vinaya of
Kaśmīra; Kumārajīva says nothing about a commentary on the
Vinaya of Mathurā, and there seems to be no reason why he should
say anything about a commentary on the Vinaya of Kaśmīra. But if
Kumārajīva was faced with arguments such as that of Sêng yu, he
would have been obliged to defend the Sarvāstivādin tradition of
Kaśmīra. This statement can perhaps be read as that of an apologist
trying to explain why the Vinaya of Kaśmīra (the Sarvāstivādin
Vinaya) deviated from an old tradition about the Vinaya of Upāli in
eighty sections. Kumārajīva explained the fact away by stating that
there is nothing amiss with the Sarvāstivādin Vinaya because it
accepted 'only the essentials', and in any case has a Vibhāṣā in
eighty sections.

This evidence explains the reasons for a dispute between the
monastic communities of Kaśmīra and Mathurā, a dispute which
seems inevitable given the term *mūlasarvāstivādin* and the
references to Kaśmīra in the otherwise Mathurān Mūlasarvāstivādin
Vinaya. It suggests the possibility that the Mūlasarvāstivādins at
some point claimed that their Vinaya was the original source of the
Sarvāstivādin Vinaya. This is tantamount to claiming that the
Sarvāstivādins were an offshoot sect from themselves, and this is
not so far from claiming to be the original (*mūla*) Sarvāstivādins. If
the older Buddhist community from Mathurāmigrated to Kaśmīra,
and squabbled with the esteemed Sarvāstivādin community about
the relative antiquity of their Vinayas – claiming that their Vinaya
was the source of the Sarvāstivādin Vinaya – it is easy to see that
they came to refer to themselves as the Mūlasarvāstivādins.

In conclusion, it seems that the key to the Sarvāstivādin/
Mūlasarvāstivādin problem is twofold: the fact that there are two
separate Vinayas bearing their names, and the oddity that the term
mūlasarvāstivādin is used as the name of a sect. Any solution to the
problem must address both these points. The difference between the
Mūlasarvāstivādin and Sarvāstivādin Vinayas is not satisfactorily
explain by Lamotte or Enomoto. Lamotte does not explain how 'the
Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya was probably compiled in Kaśmīra in
order to complete the Sarvāstivādin Vinaya', whereas Enomoto

relies too heavily on late sources for his thesis that Mūlasarvāstivādin is the same as Sarvāstivādin. Crucially, both offer simplistic explanations of Kumārajīva's statement about the Vinayas of Kaśmīra and Mathurā, and it would appear that they do not take this problem seriously. In contrast to this, Frauwallner's explanation of the origin of these two different Vinayas is convincing: his analysis of the Kaśmīrian strata in the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya strongly suggests that the text originally belonged to the ancient monastic community Mathurā.

None of the above scholars have proposed a reasonable explanation of the term *mūlasarvāstivādin*. Frauwallner at least recognised the 'fanciful' nature of later Chinese interpretations of the term,[25] but did not venture further than this. If a polemic origin is accepted for the term –and I can think of no other explanation that makes any sense of the prefix *mūla* – I have claimed that a satisfactory explanation can be derived from Frauwallner's thesis about the later Kaśmīrian interpolations in the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya. These suggest that the Mathurān community expanded or migrated to Kaśmīra, and since there is late evidence that there was a dispute about the relative antiquity of the Vinaya traditions of these two communities, we can explain the origination of the term *mūlasarvāstivādin* as follows.

In the competition for local patronage in Kaśmīra and Gandhāra, the Mathurān community could not realistically have claimed intellectual superiority over the sophisticated Sarvāstivādin community. But since the tradition that the original Vinaya of Upāli consisted of eighty sections matched the form of their own Vinaya – perhaps it originated from the form of their own Vinaya – they could claim that their Vinaya tradition was more ancient and that they were a more authentic Buddhist sect. Given the importance attached to these matters in ancient times, this would probably have been their strongest point in any squabble between the two monastic communities. The evidence of Sêng yu suggests that the two communities did indeed squabble about their Vinayas. A polemic

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[25] Frauwallner (1956: 25) commented on the late interpretations of the term *mūlasarvāstivādin* by Yi-jing and Vinītadeva as follows: 'In both cases it is a fanciful derivation from the name itself of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, which means "the original Sarvāstivādin". The idea is either that the name indicates the group from which the several schools are issued, or it is given to the school which is credited with preserving the old pure teaching as against later derivations. But nothing is gained thereby.'

against the Vinaya of Kaśmīr arose: it was claimed that this Vinaya was intended for those of 'weak faculties', and was in fact a reduction of a Vinaya in eighty sections related to Upagupta, i.e. the Vinaya of Mathurā.

This perspective might explain the interpolations into the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya that show a connection between the Mathurān community and Kaśmīra. These interpolations could have formed the basis of the claim that the community of Kaśmīra was an offshoot of the lineage of Mathurā. The interpolations therefore achieved a polemic purpose – perhaps this is why they were inserted into the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya, although even if not, i.e. even if they were originally composed to show a connection between the Mathurān community and Kaśmīra, they would have allowed the community of Mathurā to cite textual evidence for the claim that they were the source of the community of Kaśmīra. Backed up by this textual evidence, as well as the tradition about the original Vinaya of Upāli, it would have been possible for the Buddhist community of Mathurā to claim that they were the origin or 'root' (Mūla-) of the Kaśmīri Sarvāstivādins.

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