

# Flirtation with the other: an examination of the processes of othering in the Pali *Vinaya*

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## Abstract

This article identifies and examines processes of othering in an early Indian Buddhist ascetic text, the Pali *Vinaya* of the Theravādins. By means of: (1) a critical discussion of the fact that the Pali *Vinaya* holds several terms for the early Buddhists' ascetic others; and (2) a close reading and analysis of a small group of – easily overlooked – Pali *Vinaya* passages with explicit references to supposed practices of the early Buddhists' ascetic others, I make explicit two aspects of the processes of othering of the early Buddhist ascetic community. I show how through processes of othering Buddhist *bhikkhus*, or at the very least the monk-editors of the Pali *Vinaya*, both negotiated a collective identity notion, and reflected on the significance of their own practices and values in direct relation to those of their ascetic others, whether real or imagined.

**Keywords:** Early Buddhism, Theravāda, Pali *Vinaya*, Buddhist identity, Othering, *Titthiya* (Skt. *tīrthika*)

Othering, as understood in this article, is the ongoing dynamic process of placing sameness and difference while negotiating one's identity. This basic sociological law is true for both the individual search for identity and the articulation of the collective identity of a community. The very notion of an individual or collective self depends on the ability to relate, in terms of sameness and difference, to the various subjects of one's environment. In agreement with this notion of othering, identity will here be viewed as a relational concept, requiring and resulting from the so-called theory of the other; in other words, identity will be considered to be the temporary outcome of the ongoing dynamic process of othering.

Over the past few decades there has been a growing interest among scholars of religion to enquire into processes of othering in religious discourse. The number of studies applying a non-essential dialectical definition of identity to a religious subject of investigation began to grow significantly during the 1970s and

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1980s.<sup>1</sup> Studies started to question how religious communities saw themselves through their others, how they dealt with the problem of these others, or how religious communities articulated a distinct identity in relation to these very others.<sup>2</sup> Recently, these interrelated questions of othering and identity have also been raised to principal subjects of investigation within the field of Buddhist Studies.<sup>3</sup> This is not surprising as there are several methodological merits and interesting new insights to be gained from the question of othering.

A first key merit of Buddhological studies questioning the dialectic role of the other is that they recognize the important fact that “the” Buddhist tradition, whether in its formative stages in India or in its expansion through Asia and beyond, developed in constant dialogue with its wider environment. Focusing on the other, analysing how the other is dealt with, perceived, imagined and related to, means that one is acknowledging the crucial fact that whatever falls under the – constructed – denomination Buddhism has never been is, or will be, static, but instead is in constant negotiation and reflection or, to use a hydraulic metaphor, flux.<sup>4</sup> Also, the study of the process of othering in the establishment of, let’s say, a Buddhist community, philosophical treatise or monastic text, underscores the complexity of its development and thus avoids the loophole of essentializing the subjects of inquiry into *the* Buddhist *tradition*. The value of this fact cannot be underestimated when we take serious note of the postcolonial criticism that nineteenth-century scholarship on Buddhism created cultural stereotypes when uncovering the so-called “essence” of Buddh“ism”.<sup>5</sup> In addition, for the scholar studying (ancient) Buddhist texts the enquiry into the process of othering offers an effective methodological tool to break through the normative and prescriptive façade of these texts and to bring to the surface their underlying dialogues. Finally, focusing on the process of othering sheds light on the important issues of boundary making and on the interesting but tricky question of what makes a Buddhist community, philosophical tenet or ascetic practice at a certain place and time, “Buddhist”.

Yet despite these promising insights gained from the question of othering, its possibilities for enhancing our understanding of the history of the early Indian Buddhist ascetic tradition have hitherto remained largely unexplored.<sup>6</sup> The

- 1 During the 1970s and 1980s a general trend developed within academic disciplines to de-essentialize both the subjects of research and products of knowledge. This “anti-essentialist” trend may be understood as a reflexive response to the changing world scene post-World War II, the 1968 cultural revolutions, and the subsequent heightened political awareness brought about in academia by theorists of knowledge such as Michel Foucault.
- 2 See e.g. Folkert and Cort (1975–89) 1993; Neusner and Frerichs 1984.
- 3 See e.g. Freiburger 1998; Krämer et al. 2010; Lindquist 2011; Deeg 2013.
- 4 On the concept of “hydraulic metaphors” in Buddhist studies, see Tweed 2011.
- 5 For insightful discussions of nineteenth-century scholarship on Buddhism, see among others: Lopez 1995; Hallisey 1995; Snodgrass 2007; King (1999) 2008.
- 6 With reference to the early Indian Buddhist context, I use the term “ascetic” in a broad sense – that is, as referring to any community possibly understood by the “*samaṇa-brāhmaṇa*” compound (Skt. *śramaṇa-brāhmaṇa*). I thus use the term simply in opposition to the “household community”, irrespective of the varying degrees of practised austerity (*tapas*) between the various *samaṇa-brāhmaṇa* communities or within one and the same community.

purpose of this paper is to take a first step in filling this gap by offering to identify and examine processes of othering in an early Indian Buddhist ascetic text, the Pali *Vinaya* of the Theravādins. By means of: (1) a critical discussion of the fact that the Pali *Vinaya* holds several terms for the early Buddhists' ascetic others; and (2) a close reading and analysis of a small group of (easily overlooked) Pali *Vinaya* passages with explicit references to supposed practices of the early Buddhists' ascetic others, I make explicit two aspects of the processes of othering of the early Buddhist ascetic community. I show how through processes of othering Buddhist *bhikkhus*, or at the very least the monk-editors of the Pali *Vinaya*, both negotiated a collective identity notion, and reflected on the significance of their own practices and values in direct relation to those of their ascetic others, whether real or imagined. At the same time, we hope that the research presented in this article will bear further testimony to the value of the Pali *Vinaya* as a rich source of information regarding many diverse facets of early Indian Buddhist ascetic life, beyond the fact that the reputation of the Pali *Vinaya* as a historical document has repeatedly – and justly – been questioned.<sup>7</sup>

The Pali *Vinaya* passages selected for this paper constitute a unity regarding both their discussed subject matter and formulation. They determine the offence committed for ordaining a candidate into the Buddhist *saṅgha* without having provided him first with what Isaline Blew Horner has termed the two “symbols of entry into the Order”:<sup>8</sup> the Buddhist robe (*cīvara*) and begging bowl (*patta*).<sup>9</sup> They are the briefest type of Pali *Vinaya* narrative: one or two sentences recounting a particular action of a Buddhist *bhikkhu* (“monk”, Skt. *bhikṣu*) (here ordaining one who does not have a Buddhist robe and/or a begging bowl), a repudiation of that action and the subsequent formulation of a precept by the Buddha. As such, these passages seem quite trivial and, unsurprisingly, have not until now been the subject of any critical analysis. However, for the purposes of the present investigation – an identification and understanding of the processes of othering in the Pali *Vinaya* – these passages are most valuable for two reasons. First, they contain explicit references to ascetic others and some of their supposed practices. Second, they use the telling stock phrase “*seyyathāpi tiṭṭhiya*”, meaning “just like adherents of a different ascetic community”. It may be noted that my concern with these references to ascetic others is not so much with historical facticity, but rather with the light they throw on the processes of othering of the early Buddhist ascetic community. Beyond the fact, if these references to ascetic others reflect faithful historical events, they offer, as

7 For references, see n. 14.

8 Cf. BD III 13, fn. 5. For the Pali *Vinaya* we refer to the edition and translation published by the Pali Text Society (PTS). Abbreviations used in this article are as follows: Vin = *Vinaya*; Vin I 90 = *Vinaya* volume one, p. 90. For I.B. Horner's translation of the Pali *Vinaya*, the six volumes of *The Book of the Discipline*, we use the abbreviation BD. Thus, BD IV 114 refers to *The Book of the Discipline*, volume four p. 114. For bibliographical details, see Horner (1879–83) 1997–2006.

9 Of the various ordination formulas (*kammavācā*, see e.g. Vin I 56, 10 ff.; 57, 10 ff.; 95, 17 ff.), the regulation that a candidate should at the time of his ordination be “complete as to bowl and robe” (*paripunn̄' assa pattaṅcīvaraṃ*) is not the original variant, but also not the most recent development.

I will demonstrate in detail in this paper, rare and tangible evidence of how the presence and interaction with different but similarly organized ascetic communities played an important dialectic role in the development of the early Buddhist ascetic community. I will argue that these references, despite their apparent triviality, throw valuable light on the processes of othering of the early Buddhist ascetic community. They illustrate both how the early Buddhist ascetic community negotiated a collective identity notion through reflection on and creation of its ascetic others, and how the early Buddhist *bhikkhus*, or at the very least the monk-editors of the Pali *Vinaya*, reflected on the importance of their own practices and values in direct relation to those of their ascetic others, whether real or imagined.

This article is divided into three parts. In part I, I consider the significance of the fact that the Pali *Vinaya* holds several terms for the early Buddhists' ascetic others. Drawing on Jonathan Z. Smith's theory of "proximate other", I show how already the mere existence of ascetic others had an important reflexive and dynamic impact on the early Buddhist ascetic community. Part II proceeds to analyse our selected group of *Vinaya* passages: here I focus mainly on its references to alleged practices of others, and examine the importance of the presence of the stock phrase "*seyyathāpi tīthiyā*". In part III, special attention is given to one particular denomination for the early Buddhists' ascetic other, namely "*acela (ka)*" or "one without cloth". On a micro-level I point out the reflexive aspect of this metonymical denomination. I show how the term *acela(ka)*, used in the Pali *Vinaya* to refer to a certain group of ascetic others, reflects how Buddhist *bhikkhus* valued and stressed the importance of their practice of wearing a "cloth" (*cela*) in direct relation to the practice of their ascetic others of being "*acela*" or "without cloth". On a macro- or theoretical level, I show how metonymies are illustrative of the fact that one's self-definition and perception stand in constant dialogue with one's proximate others, whether real or imagined.

## Part I

### The Pali *Vinaya*: tradition versus historical facts

The Pali *Vinaya*, the disciplinary code of the Theravāda school, is a large and highly redacted ascetic text regulating many and diverse aspects of ascetic life through detailed descriptions of legal procedures, ceremonies, multiple "dos and don'ts" and several hundred rules for the Buddhist monk and nun. The Pali *Vinaya* consists of three main parts: the *Suttavibhaṅga*, the *Khandhaka* and *Parivāra*.<sup>10</sup> Of these three, the *Parivāra* (Appendix) is the most recent. It is a very technical text, giving a systematic overview of law.<sup>11</sup> The *Suttavibhaṅga* contains and comments on the *Pātimokkhasutta*, or the 227 rules of conduct for the Buddhist monk and the 311 rules of conduct for the

10 For a discussion of the historical development of the different parts of the Pali *Vinaya*, see von Hinüber 1996: 19, §37; 1999.

11 The *Parivāra* presupposes the *Suttavibhaṅga* and *Khandhaka*. Cf. von Hinüber 1996: 15–21 (*Khandhaka*), 21–2 (*Parivāra*).

Buddhist nun.<sup>12</sup> The *Suttavibhaṅga* introduces each of its rules with an introductory story recounting the occasion and reason for their formulation. The *Khandhaka* starts with the Buddha's enlightenment and contains, besides technical guidelines for ceremonies, admission and ordination procedures, rules defining decorum and proper clothing. Like the introductory stories of the *Suttavibhaṅga*, narratives are attached to each regulation of the *Khandhaka*, recording the specific incident that would have necessitated them. The fact that the *Suttavibhaṅga* and the *Khandhaka* have introductory stories and narratives accompanying each of their regulations makes the Pali *Vinaya* a potentially rich source of information regarding the formative stages of the early Indian Buddhist ascetic community.<sup>13</sup> However, as *Vinaya* experts have pointed out, there are several serious difficulties with consulting the Pali *Vinaya* as a historical document. Regarding factuality and completeness of the Pali *Vinaya*, we cannot be sure to what extent the precepts (and this is true for all *Vinayas*) were actually observed and, turning this problem around, we do not know to what extent the precepts regulating early Indian Buddhist ascetic life have factually been included in the Pali *Vinaya*.<sup>14</sup> Broadly speaking, the main difficulties with consulting the Pali *Vinaya* as a historical source relate to: (1) its complex textual development; and (2) its overt concern for tradition versus historical facts.

I will tackle the crux of the Pali *Vinaya*'s textual development first – having developed over a long period of time, the Pali *Vinaya* presents itself as a very fragmented, heterogeneous text. First, the various “Māgadhisms” encountered in the so-called Pali language suggest that the Pali *Vinaya* is in part the result of a transposition from (an) earlier eastern version(s).<sup>15</sup> Second, the Pali *Vinaya* had a complex textual development, having ensued from a set of ascetic regulations first brought from India to Sri Lanka during Aśoka's reign, before being written down in a *Vinaya* compilation.<sup>16</sup> The textual fragmentation of the Pali *Vinaya* is still well observable at the temporal gap between the precepts

- 12 The *Suttavibhaṅga* is structured as follows: introductory story, rule, (sometimes followed by) additional conditions, the *Padabhājanīya* or old word-for-word commentary, exceptions to the rule (sometimes concluded with) exemplary cases (that may be rounded off with a final reformulation of the precept). For more details on the internal structure of the *Suttavibhaṅga*, see Nolot 1994: 103–20 and von Hinüber 1996: 8–21.
- 13 Collins (1990: 89) considers the early period of Theravāda Buddhist history to be “the time of the Buddha (whenever that was) to that of Aśoka”.
- 14 On this problem see, among others: Schopen 1991; Collins 1990: 89, 102; Hallisey 1990: 207–8; and Clarke 2009: 35–9. For helpful methodological guidelines to extract “social and religious realities” from *Vinayas*, see Witkowski (forthcoming).
- 15 On the Māgadhisms in the Pali language and the Pali canon being in part the result of a “transposition” of (an) earlier eastern version(s), see Warder 1967: 7–14; Norman 1980; 1989; von Hinüber 1996: 4–5, §7–9. See also von Hinüber (1999: 47 f. and 84 f.), where he argues for a temporal or geographical distance between the *Pātimokkhasutta* and the *Padabhājanīya* (the old word-for-word commentary) on the basis that the monetary unit *pāda* occurring in a precept of the *Pātimokkhasutta* has been replaced by *māsaka* in the accompanying *Padabhājanīya* section.
- 16 According to the Buddhist tradition recorded in the Sri Lankan *Mahāvamsa* chronicle, the Pali *Vinaya* was committed to the written form and commented upon in the first century BCE. For more details, see Kieffer-Pülz 2014: 51. For a scholarly discussion of possible chronologies and dates for both the content and end-redaction of the Pali *Vinaya*

and their accompanying introductory story in the *Suttavibhaṅga*. In this section of the Pali *Vinaya* introductory stories often betray a made-up character by misunderstanding or showing a different concern from the precept they introduce.<sup>17</sup> Also, many of the narratives of the *Khandhaka* section are at times only very loosely connected to the rules they precede, and have an invented ring.<sup>18</sup> This brings us to the second difficulty with consulting the Pali *Vinaya* as a historical document: the problem of tradition versus historical facts.

Given the invented tone of many of the introductory stories of the *Suttavibhaṅga* and the *Khandhaka* narratives, it is clear that they were – contrary to what we would have liked – not developed as faithful historical reports. But the question persists as to why they were developed. Being structured around the principles of what today is called “case law”, the Pali *Vinaya* needs to ground each of its precepts on a specific incident.<sup>19</sup> The overall function of the stories within the Pali *Vinaya* is precisely this: recounting the alleged when and why of each Pali *Vinaya* regulation. Unfortunately, these stories are, as we have just seen, rarely historically faithful.

When we question the function of the various Pali *Vinaya* stories by considering their narrative structure, then their prime function appears to have been the *creation* of the very tradition they claim to represent. The typical narrative structure of the stories effects a strong traditional story regarding the origin and development of the Buddhist ascetic *saṅgha*. It is created by reverting to stock phrases; by using a repetitive structure; and, most importantly, by placing the executive role for every legal decision with the Buddha himself.

Recognizing this and other, so to speak, “flaws” of the Pali *Vinaya* as a ready historical document for the ins and outs of early Indian Buddhist ascetic life, scholars have been quick to point out that the Pali *Vinaya* nevertheless also has a rich historical value. For instance, according to Charles Hallisey the Pali *Vinaya* is historically valuable “in its being a coherent expression of a particular Buddhist *mentalité*”.<sup>20</sup> Also, if not representing actual Indian Buddhist ascetic life, it is at least “providing us with rich insights into how the canonical authors/redactors, the ascetic lawmakers, envisaged the Indian Buddhist experience. . .”.<sup>21</sup> Shayne Clark in a recent study highlighted the value of the various *Vinaya* stories as follows:

Whether the narratives attached to ascetic regulations are based on historical events or not, it is precisely the narratives that are . . . invaluable for the historian of religion or religious thought. What is of importance here is not the historicity of the event, but the value that the ascetic traditions

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and other canonical sources, see among others Schopen 1997: esp. pp. 27–9, Clarke 2014 and Kieffer-Pülz 2014.

17 Cf. von Hinüber 1996: 13, §20; Schlingloff 1964: 536–51.

18 Cf. Dutt (1924) 1996: 24–7.

19 Cf. Kieffer-Pülz 2014: 74.

20 Hallisey 1990: 208.

21 Clarke 2009: 36. Clarke formulated this pointed observation with regard to all Indian Buddhist monastic law codes, thus not particularly to the Pali one.



themselves attached to and invested in it. Such stories must be, at least in part, credible or plausible . . . .<sup>22</sup>

Concurring with this opinion that the narratives attached to ascetic regulations are indeed invaluable for the present-day researcher, I wish to demonstrate in this article how the various stories within the Pali *Vinaya* throw light on the processes of othering of the early Buddhist ascetic community. Thanks to their various terms for and references to the early Buddhist *bhikkhu*'s ascetic other, the stories can disclose valuable information on the dialectical role non-Buddhist ascetics played in the development of the early Buddhist ascetic community.

### **What's in a name? Denominations for the ascetic other in the Pali *Vinaya***

Given the normative character of the Pali *Vinaya*, how are we to identify in this body of text processes of othering? An efficient method, I suggest, is by means of analysing its various denominations for the ascetic others. The terms the Pali *Vinaya* uses to refer to the early Buddhist's real or imagined ascetic others can, I believe, give valuable insights into the processes of othering of the early Buddhist ascetic community. For denominations are never neutral. They are value carriers and establishers. As such they are not interchangeable; each denomination gives a unique insight into how the early Buddhist community perceived and related to its ascetic other in terms of sameness and difference.

When perusing the Pali *Vinaya* an obvious but important observation is that the Pali *Vinaya* hosts a wide array of terms to refer to the early Buddhist's ascetic others. This, in itself, is already reflective of the dynamic and dialectic force ascetic others exerted on the Buddhist ascetic *saṅgha*. For analytical purposes, the various terms may be grouped into three categories: one-to-one denominations; generic denominations; and metonymical denominations.

By one-to-one denominations I understand terms having an explicit correspondence with an individual or a group of individuals belonging to the historical ascetic landscape of the early Indian Buddhist ascetic community. This group includes terms such as *nigaṇṭha*, *nigaṇṭhasāvaka*, *Nātaputta Nigaṇṭha*, *ājīvika* and *jaṭiḷa*<sup>23</sup> – such terms show that early Buddhists knew how members of other contemporary ascetic communities denominated themselves, or at least, if the terms in question were not (the sole ones which were) applied internally, how they were commonly referred to by others.<sup>24</sup> Therefore these terms could have sufficed to refer to their contemporary ascetic others. Yet, despite the

22 Clarke 2009: 36.

23 *nigaṇṭha* (Skt. *nirgrantha*) “without bonds”, i.e. a Jain ascetic; *nigaṇṭhasāvaka* (Skt. *nirgranthaśrāvaka*) “a disciple of the Jain fold”; *Nātaputta Nigaṇṭha* “Mahāvīra”; *jaṭiḷa* “matted hair ascetic”.

24 For instance, the term *nigaṇṭha* was applied both “internally” (within the Jain community itself) as well as “externally” (outside, or not belonging to, the Jain community) to refer to members of the Jain creed. For an internal use of *nigaṇṭha* see, e.g., the many injunctions of the Jain *Kappa Sutta* (the fifth of the six *Cheya-Suttas*) addressed to the *nigaṇṭha* and *niggaṇṭhi* of the community. (Cf. *Kalpa-Sūtra*, Schubring (ed. and tr.) (1905) 1977.) Regarding the *ājīvika* denomination, Jain canonical texts have the corresponding Prakrit term *ājīvaga*. On *ājīvikas*, see Basham (1951) 1981. On the *ājīvikas*' so-called philosophy of fatalism, see Bronkhorst 2000; 2002.

presence and knowledge of these denominations that, it should be stressed, had an unambiguous one-to-one correspondence, they developed and adopted a large vocabulary for their ascetic others with far more ambiguous terms.

The group of generic denominations includes terms referring to individuals or communities supposedly belonging to the historical ascetic landscape of the early Buddhist community, but whose ascetic affiliation is uncertain. In generic denominations the specific affiliation of the ascetic cannot be deduced from the denomination itself. Terms belonging to this group are the compound *samaṇa-brāhmaṇa*; and the terms *samaṇa*; *brāhmaṇa*; *paribbājaka*; *aññatitthiya*; *aññatitthiya paribbājaka*; *titthiya*; *titthiyasāvaka*; *titthiyapak-kanta*; *sabbapāsaṇḍika*; *samaṇakuttaka*, etc.<sup>25</sup>

Standing alone in the third category is the metonymical denomination *acela (ka)*. Though also having an ambiguous reference field, *acela(ka)* needs to be set apart from the group of generic denominations for its explicit reflexive element. As will be explained, in metonymical denominations the other is being referred to in direct relation to the self. This reflexive aspect typical of metonymical denominations makes the term *acela(ka)* particularly suited for our present study of the processes of othering of the early Buddhist ascetic community. It will therefore be analysed in detail in Part III.

Of all the Pali *Vinaya* terms referring to ascetic others, the generic denominations are those reverted to most frequently (and then especially *titthiya*). This is not surprising when we remember the normative nature of the Pali *Vinaya*. Considering the Pali *Vinaya*'s unflinching emphasis on the central role and authority of the Buddha in the development of the Buddhist ascetic *saṅgha*, we can readily understand why generic denominations were preferred to one-to-one denominations. Generic denominations can refer to the Buddhist's ascetic others without, however, accrediting the positive influence they had on the development of the Buddhist ascetic *saṅgha*. One-to-one denominations if used too abundantly do. Be that as it may, the very presence in the Pali *Vinaya* of this wide array of terms referring to ascetic others, shows how they played a dynamic role in the development of an early Buddhist identity rhetoric. This especially becomes clear when ascetic contemporaries to the early Indian Buddhists are understood to be the latter's "proximate other".

### The dynamic concept of "proximate other"

It is not difficult to imagine how direct and indirect contact between the Buddhist *saṅgha* and *brāhmaṇa* or other similarly organized *samaṇa* communities such as the *niṅaṅṭha* (i.e. Jain) and *ājīvika* concretely resulted in the formulation and establishment of certain *Vinaya* precepts and structures. Indeed,

25 *samaṇa* (Skt. *śramaṇa*) "recluse"; *paribbājaka* (Skt. *parivrājaka*) "wandering mendicant"; *aññatitthiya* (Skt. *anyaṭṭitika*) "(an adherent of) a different ascetic community"; *aññatitthiya paribbājaka* "a wandering mendicant belonging to a different ascetic community"; *titthiya* (Skt. *tīrthika*) "(an adherent of) a different ascetic community"; *titthiyasāvaka* (Skt. *tīrthikaśrāvaka*) "a disciple of a different ascetic community"; *titthiyapak-kanta* "one gone over to a different ascetic community"; *sabbapāsaṇḍika* "all heretics"; *samaṇakuttaka* "a sham recluse". For an examination of the reference field of the term *paribbājaka* in the Pali canon, see Freiburger 1997.



nineteenth-century scholars, investigating in the true scientific spirit of their century the original “Buddhism” and “Jainism”, have pointed out the many similarities between the principal ascetic precepts and structures of the Buddhist, *nigaṇṭha* and *brāhmaṇa* communities.<sup>26</sup> In fact, they were often so struck by these similarities that they concluded that the Buddhist and Jain community must have borrowed extensively from the *brāhmaṇa* community, generally considering the latter as the more powerful and authoritative.<sup>27</sup> In addition their broad similarities, the different ascetic communities seem also to have had a detailed knowledge of each other’s organization, practices and doctrine.<sup>28</sup> Seen from this perspective it is only sound to assume that the Buddhist *saṅgha*’s interaction with *brāhmaṇas* and *samaṇas* resulted in concrete dynamic contributions to its development. But the influence of contemporary non-Buddhist ascetics was not limited to this, as it were, *positive* dynamic contribution. These non-Buddhist ascetics also exerted a *negative*, or rather, *reflexive* dynamic force on the organization, self-perception and identity rhetoric of the Buddhist ascetic *saṅgha*. The mere presence of ascetic others continuously challenged the authority of the Buddhist *saṅgha* vis-à-vis both its internal organization and its claim of membership within the wider ascetic landscape. The recognition of the Buddhist *saṅgha* as a *samaṇa* community not only depended on a functional and somehow unifying internal organization of its members, but also on the willingness of both the lay community and the other *samaṇa* communities to

- 26 For a discussion of the history of Jain studies with its nineteenth-century stress on origin, see among others Folkert (1989) 1993; (1975–80) 1993; Cort 1990; (1998) 1999: 1–14. For references to scholarly discussions on nineteenth-century scholarship on Buddhism, see n. 5. For a socio-cultural historical analysis of the rise of the “science of religion” with its initial stress on origin and development, see Krech 2000. See also Kippenberg’s (2002) monograph *Discovering Religious History in the Modern Age* discussing the rise of the historical concept of religion against the nineteenth-century background of modernization.
- 27 A paradigmatic example of this view is Jacobi’s 1884 argumentation on the independent origin of the Jain tradition. Part of his argument consisted of comparing the rules for the *brāhmaṇa* (Baudhyāna), Jain and Buddhist wanderer. Showing that the many similarities between the Jain and Buddhist communities were also shared with the *brāhmaṇa* community, he concluded that this did not suggest that the Jains copied the Buddhists (as it was then currently thought), but that it was an indication that the *brāhmaṇa* ascetic was the true reference for the Jains, since the *brāhmaṇa* institution: “being a model of higher antiquity and authority [than the Buddhist], the Gainas would probably have conformed rather to it than to the less respected and second-hand model of their rivals, the Buddhists” (Cf. Jacobi (1884) 1989: xxix). The reason why nineteenth-century scholars agreed in viewing the *brāhmaṇas* as the authoritative and historical model for the internal developments within the Buddhist and Jain traditions is a question worthy of critical consideration as this early Indological discourse became the dominant scholarly frame through which many of the early Buddhist and Jain texts have been read and interpreted.
- 28 For example, when juxtaposing a passage from the Buddhist *Majjhima-Nikāya* (MN I 342–3, cf. also *Dīgha-Nikāya* I 141 and *Anguttara-Nikāya* II 205–6) listing detailed food practices of those practising *tapas* (*attantapa*) with a passage from the Jain *Dasaveyāliya Sutta* (DS *sutta* 42–65) treating food injunctions for the *niggaṇṭha*, one notes a striking similarity regarding both the content of the practices and, at times, their enumeration sequence too! For the PTS edition of the *Majjhima-Nikāya*, see Trenckner (1888)1948: Vol. I. For a critical text edition of the *Dasaveyāliya Sutta* (Skt. *Daśavaikālika Sūtra*) see Leumann 1932.

acknowledge its *samaṇa* status, an acknowledgement which ensured specific types of social relationships and actions. In this respect, the various contemporary ascetic communities constituted the early Buddhist's "proximate other".

The dynamic concept of "proximate other" has been developed by theorist and historian of religion Jonathan Z. Smith in his essays entitled "Differential equations: on constructing the other" and "What a difference a difference can make".<sup>29</sup> The core idea behind the concept of proximate other is that, unlike the ideologically (and, in our case, geographically)<sup>30</sup> remote other (as, for instance, the Native American Navajo is to the Indian Jain), the proximate other demands, and effects, a process of othering. The proximate other invites a discourse of difference wherein a rhetoric of self-definition and reflection can be developed. Unlike the remote other or absolute other, the presence of a proximate other creates the basic need for the establishment, or at least the reconsideration, of boundaries where differences and similarities can be negotiated. The dialectical force of the proximate other lies in the fact that when a community is defining its proximate other it is simultaneously defining itself. Dealing with and defining one's proximate other entails "complex reciprocal relationships" and results in a double definition of "them" and "us", with "us" being defined vis-à-vis "them", and "them" vis-à-vis "us".<sup>31</sup> It is in the presence of one's proximate other that a "theory of the other" becomes compelling. In the words of Jonathan Z. Smith:

Rather than the remote "other" being perceived as problematic and/or dangerous, it is the proximate "other," the near neighbor, who is most troublesome. That is to say, while difference or "otherness" may be perceived as being either LIKE-US or NOT-LIKE-US, it becomes most problematic when it is TOO-MUCH-LIKE-US or when it claims to BE-US. It is here that the real urgency of theories of the "other" emerges, called forth not so much by a requirement to place difference, but rather by an effort to situate ourselves. This, then, is not a matter of the "far" but preeminently of the "near". The deepest intellectual issues are not based upon perceptions of alterity, but, rather, of similarity, at times, even, of identity. (Smith (1992) 2004: 245.)

- 29 "Differential equations: on constructing the 'Other'" in Smith (1992) 2004, 230–50. This essay was first delivered in 1992 as a lecture at Arizona State University. "What a difference a difference makes" Smith (1985) 2004, 251–301 was initially developed as a keynote lecture for a 1984 conference at Brown University, entitled "*To see ourselves as others see us*": *Christian, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity*. An identically titled volume based on the conference was edited by Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs in 1985.
- 30 As the notion of distance is being drastically reconceived in our digitized world, geographical proximity – in literal terms of kilometres – is not essential for initiating processes of othering in present-day societies. However, the importance of geographical proximity is obvious for the formative stages of the Buddhist community, since during that time verbal word-of-mouth communication was the sole means of ideas to spread. As regards the concept of "remote other", Jonathan Z. Smith gives the Kwakiutl as an example of Christians' remote other. (Cf. Smith (1992) 2004: 276.)
- 31 This phrasing of "us" and "them" is inspired by the writings of Green and Smith on the specific issue of "double metonymy". (Cf. Green 1985: 50; and Smith (1992) 2004: 232.) The issue of double metonymy is addressed in part III.

To this he further shrewdly adds “[a] ‘theory of the other’ is but another way of phrasing a ‘theory of the self’”. (Smith (1985) 2004: 275.) Smith formulated his reflections on “proximate other” while investigating “the history of the western imagination of the ‘other’”, and though his reflections are therefore mainly framed by a historical perspective on the dynamics of cultural encounters, it is nevertheless highly relevant to question to what extent his dynamic, dialectical concept of “proximate other” is applicable to the manner in which early Buddhists conceptualized and dealt with their contemporary ascetic others. As Jonathan Z. Smith ((1985) 2004: 245) remarks “the issue of problematic similarity or identity seems to be particularly prevalent in religious discourse and imagination”.

Indeed, the group of narratives that we selected for examining the process of othering in the Pali *Vinaya* reflects an anxious concern of the early Buddhists to be distinctive from their contemporary ascetics. Before turning to a close reading of these *Vinaya* narratives, we need to make explicit that the “proximity” of the various contemporary ascetic others is – naturally – gradated. As such there is not one but multiple proximate others. The presence of certain ascetic communities had dialectically a greater impact than others, or certain ideological claims and practices could dynamically challenge the Buddhist ideology and practices more fiercely than others. Considering the “issue of problematic similarity or identity”, we can conclude that the closer a (practice or ideology of a) community presents itself to the Buddhist community at a certain place and time, the further the Buddhist community will need to differentiate itself from it.

## Part II

### Otherring with one’s proximate others

The selected group of *Vinaya* passages consists of six *dukkata* offences (that is, offences of wrongdoing requiring expiation) and their accompanying small narratives at Mahāvagga I 70.1–6 (Vin I 90–1; BD IV 114–5). Mahāvagga I 70.1–6 is part of a larger section discussing occasions when a *bhikkhu* should not ordain. Setting Mahāvagga I 70.–6 apart from this section is the presence of the stock phrase *seyyathāpi titthiyā*, meaning “just like adherents of a different ascetic community”. In these stories Buddhist *bhikkhus* are rebuked for not wearing any robe or not using any begging bowl on the basis that they, in such instances, become too much like their ascetic others (*seyyathāpi titthiyā*). It should be noted that the occurrence of the stock phrase *seyyathāpi titthiyā* in the Pali *Vinaya* is already, in itself, reflective of the early Indian Buddhist *saṅgha*’s ongoing preoccupation with marking boundaries from its ascetic, proximate others in order to prevent its merging into these very others.<sup>32</sup> Let

32 Within canonical writing, the stock phrase *seyyathāpi titthiyā* appears only in the *Vinaya*. Apart from our selected group of *Vinaya* passages, *seyyathāpi titthiyā* occurs in the *Khandhaka* in a section regulating the begging bowl and robe, and in a section enumerating unsuitable places for entering upon the rains. At Vin II 114–5 (CV V 10.1–2; BD V 156) some *bhikkhus* using respectively a gourd and a *ghaṭikātāha*-vessel are rebuked for being *seyyathāpi titthiyā*. At Vin I 152 (MV III 12.9; BD IV 202) *bhikkhus* are rebuked with *seyyathāpi titthiyā* for having entered upon the rains in a *cāṭi*, which must have been

us now examine the processes of othering in our selected group of *Vinaya* passages.<sup>33</sup>

Mahāvagga I 70.2 determines a *dukkata* offence for a monk who ordains a candidate into the Buddhist *saṅgha* without having provided him first with a Buddhist robe. The accompanying narrative tells how a Buddhist *bhikkhu* who is *acīvara* and who, in this case, goes for alms naked (*naggā piṇḍāya caranti*)<sup>34</sup> is thought to be *seyyathāpi titthiya*. The *Vinaya* passage reads as follows:

*tena kho pana samayena bhikkhū acīvarakaṃ upasampādentī. naggā piṇḍāya caranti. manussā ujjhāyanti khīyanti vipācentī: seyyathāpi titthiyā ’ti. bhagavato etam atthaṃ ārocesuṃ. na bhikkhave acīvarako upasampādetabbo. yo upasampādeyya, āpatti dukkaṭassā ’ti.* (Vin I 90; MV I 70.2)

Now at that time monks ordained one who had no robe [*acīvarakaṃ*]. They walked naked for alms food. People were irritated, angry [and] speaking dispraisingly: “just like an adherent of a different ascetic community”. [*seyyathāpi titthiyā*]. They told this to the Bhagavat. He said: “Monks, one without a robe [*acīvaraka*] should not be ordained. [For] whoever should ordain [such one], there is an offence of wrong-doing”. (trans. partly following I.B. Horner, BD IV 114–5.)

The apparent difficulty here for allowing a Buddhist *bhikkhu* to be *acīvara* and, in our case, to be without a robe and thus naked, is that his distinctiveness from

- 
- a large tank type of vessel. In the *Suttavibhaṅga* at Vin III 245 (*nissaggiya* XXII; BD II 119), *seyyathāpi titthiyā* is mentioned once to rebuke a *bhikkhu* for going for alms to be put into his bare hands, after his begging bowl was broken. Several sections regulating the (begging) requisites also categorize some requisites as unfit on the basis that *bhikkhus* using them are *seyyathāpi gīhi kāmabhogino* or “just like householders who enjoy pleasures of the senses” (Cf. e.g. Vin I 189; Vin I 305; Vin II 115). “The householder” may therefore also correctly be conceived as “a proximate other” of the early Buddhist *saṅgha*. A Buddhist *bhikkhu* is, in part, a *bhikkhu* inasmuch as he is not a householder.
- 33 MV I 70.1 states that one should not ordain one who is *apattaka* (‘without a bowl’); MV I 70.2 states that one should not ordain one who is *acīvaraka* (without robe); MV I 70.3 states that one should not ordain one who is *apattacīvaraka* (without bowl and robe); MV I 70.4 states that monks cannot ordain by means of lending a bowl; MV I 70.5 states that monks cannot ordain by means of lending a robe; MV I 70.6 states that monks cannot ordain by means of lending a bowl and robe. As all six narratives form one unit, I have chosen to discuss the process of othering by specifically focusing on MV I 70.2. The examination of the processes of othering by means of these groups of *Vinaya* passages has no claim of being exhaustive, but hopes to function as a model for future case studies.
- 34 As the term *cīvara*, often used as a short version of *ticīvara*, stands for the three-piece Buddhist garb (*antaravāsaka* or inner robe; *uttarāsāṅga* or upper robe; and *saṅghāṭī* or outer cloak, cf. BD II 1, fn. 2; BD II 158), ‘*acīvaraka*’ could either mean: (1) “one who is not in norm regarding the three-piece Buddhist garb [but still is wearing a or some robe]”; or (2) “one who does not have a robe at all [and who is thus naked]”.

other ascetics risks dissolving.<sup>35</sup> Nakedness appears thus to be for the Buddhist *saṅgha* a signifying characteristic of a community other than itself. A Buddhist *acīvaraka* certainly is an *acīvaraka* but only perhaps a Buddhist. In other words, the problem is that the Buddhist *acīvaraka* might, from the Buddhist's point of view, become too similar or even identical to a *titthiya* (Skt. *tīrthika*). In an identical manner, at Mahāvagga I 70.1 Buddhist *bhikkhus* are being rebuked for walking for alms without a begging bowl (*apatta*) on the basis that they are *seyyathāpi titthiyā* or just like adherents of another ascetic community.

These Mahāvagga passages, together with Pali *Vinaya* narratives wherein types of begging materials and robes are declared unfit for the Buddhist *bhikkhu*, may be quoted, and justifiably have been, to argue how the early Buddhist community desired at a certain point to be visually distinctive from its ascetic, proximate other.<sup>36</sup> Though this is true, it is not all. In these narratives “the” Buddhist *bhikkhu* is also dialectically defining himself in relation to his ascetic, proximate other. First, the Buddhist *bhikkhu* is relating to his real or imagined proximate other by simply becoming this other (here, in our case, by becoming naked or *acīvara*) before he, in a second instance, distinguishes himself from this very other by rejecting the practices he came to associate with him. As such these narratives contain informative traces of the processes of othering of the early Buddhist community. They show how the early Buddhist ascetic community, or at the very least the monk-editors of the Pali *Vinaya*, reflected on the importance of the Buddhist robe and begging materials in direct relation to those of their ascetic others. Further, in such Pali *Vinaya* narratives, practices of ascetic others, whether real or imagined, are never simply referred to. Practices supposedly marking *titthiyās* are drawn in, their significance and value experimented with, at the end of this process either to be adopted as “Buddhist” or rejected as “other” (*titthiya*). In both cases, it will have effected a re-evaluation and if found necessary a (re-)negotiation of the Buddhist community's own practices and values. These arguments will shortly be substantiated with a close reading of other *Vinaya* narratives prohibiting nakedness.

Jonathan Z. Smith's theory shows that the presence of a proximate other in particular is problematic. Generally speaking, a theory of the other is a *sine qua non* for the establishment of any society, but in the vicinity of a proximate other, or in the presence of a community that is similar to one's own, the need for a “theory of the other” becomes “an urgent necessity” (Green 1985: 49–50). The underlying dynamics of a society's theory of the other have been discussed with great clarity by William Scott Green in the theoretical introduction to

35 The fact that in our *Vinaya* narrative there are people (*manussā*) pointing out that it is inappropriate for Buddhist *bhikkhus* to be *acīvara* does not alter our observation that nakedness was considered by the Buddhist community to be typical of a community other than itself. Maes (2010–11: 90–102) argues that stock phrases such as *manussā ujjhāyanti khīyanti vipācenti* mainly help structuring the *Vinaya* narratives and as such should not be taken to reflect the motive for the precepts they introduce. However, the varying subjects that might be encountered in the stock phrase *ujjhāyanti khīyanti vipācenti* (people, householders, lay followers, monks, modest monks, etc.) reflect the (groups of) individuals who might to a greater or lesser extent have had a say in the ascetic organization and legislation of the *saṅgha*.

36 Holt (1981, 1995<sup>2</sup>) 1999: 135. See also n. 32.

his essay “Otherness within: towards a theory of difference in rabbinic Judaism”.<sup>37</sup> In the most basic sense a theory of the other establishes or confirms the singularity of a community in (re)defining its collective identity. Further, it makes a community draw and reflect upon its boundaries. On a more dialectical level the theory of the other, and then, particularly of those viewed as proximate, are means by which communities can “explore their internal ambiguities and interstices, experiment with alternative values and symbols, and question their own structures and mechanisms” (Green 1985: 51).

With these observations let us return to our *Vinaya* narrative wherein Buddhist *bhikkhus* are prohibited from being *acīvara* (without robe) and thus naked on the basis that they might be perceived as belonging to a community other than their own. What does this narrative do? Perhaps it relates the historical event wherein *bhikkhus* indeed went for alms naked and were indeed mistakenly thought of as *titthiyas*, but perhaps it does not. What the narrative does tell, however, is how the early Buddhist ascetic community evolved in dialogue with its ascetic others. Containing traces of the processes of othering, it provides a glimpse of the dynamic, reflexive impact that ascetic others had on the development of the early Buddhist ascetic community. Referring to a practice of ascetic other, whether real or imagined, the narrative illustrates how Buddhist *bhikkhus*, or at least the monk-editors of the Pali *Vinaya*, questioned their own customs in direct relation to those of their ascetic others. Or the narrative shows how, through processes of othering they, to follow Green’s formulation, “explored their own ambiguities” and “experimented” with alternative practices and values. When referring to the *titthiyas*’ ascetic practice of wandering naked, the monk-editors of the Pali *Vinaya* reflect on the significance or additional value of being *acīvara* and thus, simultaneously (re)question their own practice of being *cīvara* or a wearer of robes. However quirky this issue might appear to the present-day mind, it most probably was not a random matter for early Indian Buddhists. On a historical note, we know that certain ascetics belonging to the *niganṭha* and most probably also the *ajīvika* community took up nakedness as an essential ascetic observance on their path to liberation. We may note, for instance, that one of the few fundamental points to have internally divided the *niganṭha* community was the observance or rejection of the ascetic practice of nakedness and its doctrinal motivation. The great significance the two *niganṭha* communities attached in being or not being *naggiya* is seen nowhere more clearly than in their later developed and adopted denominations of “Śvetambāra” (White clad) and “Digambara” (Sky clad).

37 Cf. fn. 29. Green’s (1985) and Smith’s ((1985) 2004) essays present similar views on the problem of the “proximate other” (though only Smith explicitly refers to this dialectical other using this term), but both have a unique approach. Green discusses the problem of the proximate other by means of a concrete ancient rabbinic discourse on the gentile (“non-Jew”). Defining the rabbinic Jewish community as principally a “textual community”, and thus viewing their text as their authoritative centre and source of definition, he argues that the “problematic proximity” of its others are conceived in terms of their attitude towards the texts. Smith, on the other hand, discusses in a somehow surprising but highly lucid manner the problem of the proximate other with its political and linguistic aspects respectively by means of: (1) the history of taxonomy in biology and the place of “parasites” therein; and by means of (2) analysing the “linguistic conquest” of America.



Another Mahāvagga passage also reflects on the significance of nakedness (and, reflexively, on the significance of not taking up the practice of nakedness) by again prohibiting it on the basis that ascetic others (*titthiyas*) adopted the practice. It is worth quoting the passage at length:

*tena kho pana samayena aññataro bhikkhu naggo hutvā yena bhagavā ten' upasaṃkami, upasaṃkamitvā bhagavantam etad avoca: bhagavā hi bhante anekapariyāyena appicchassa santuṭṭhassa sallekhaṃ dhutassa pāsādikassa apacayassa viriyārambhassa vaṇṇavādī. idam bhante naggiyam anekapariyāyena appicchatāya santuṭṭhiyā sallekkhāya dhutattāya pāsādikatāya apacayāya viriyārambhāya samvattati. Sadhu bhante bhagavā bhikkhūnam naggiyam anujānātū 'ti. vigarahi buddho bhagavā: ananucchaviyam moghapurisa ananulomikam appaṭirūpaṃ assāmaṇakam akappiyam akaraṇīyam. katham hi nāma tvam moghapurisa naggiyam titthiyasamādānam samādiyissasi. n' etam moghapurisa appasannānam vā pasādāya. vigarahitvā dhammikatham katvā bhikkhū āmantesi: na bhikkhave naggiyam titthiyasamādānam samādiyitabbam. yo samādiyeyya, āpatti thullaccayassā 'ti. (Vin I 305; MV VIII 28.1)*

Now at that time a certain monk, having become naked [*naggo hutvā*], approached the Bhagavat; having approached he spoke thus to the Bhagavat: “Bhagavat, in many a figure is the Bhagavat a speaker in praise of desiring little, of contentment, of expunging (evil), of punctiliousness, of graciousness, of decreasing (the obstructions), of putting forth energy. Bhagavat, this nakedness [*idam naggiyam*] is, in many a figure, useful for desiring little, for contentment, for expunging (evil), for punctiliousness, for graciousness, for decreasing (the obstructions), for putting forth energy. It were good, Bhagavat, if the Bhagavat were to allow nakedness [*naggiyam*] for monks.”

The Buddha, the Bhagavat rebuked him, saying: “It is not becoming, it is not suitable, it is not fitting, it is not worthy of a recluse [*assāmaṇakam*], it is not allowable, it is not to be done. How can you, foolish man, adopt nakedness [*naggiyam*], that is practiced by adherents of a different ascetic community [*titthiyasamādānam*]? It is not, foolish man, for pleasing those who are not (yet) pleased. . . .”

Having rebuked him, having given *dhamma* talk, he addressed the monks saying: “Monks, nakedness, which is practiced by adherents of a different ascetic community [*titthiyasamādānam*], is not to be adopted. [For] whoever who should adopt it, there is a grave offence.” (trans. partly following I.B. Horner, BD IV 436)

In this passage, a member of the Buddhist *saṅgha* is quickly put in his place for pleading to incorporate “nakedness” as an effective means on the ascetic path. Rebuking him, the Buddha prohibits nakedness (*naggiya*) on the basis that it is being practised by ascetic others. Though the ascetic practice of nakedness might indeed have been valued by some Buddhist monks, its possibility for

the Buddhist community is seen as problematic. In the presence of ascetic others practising “nakedness” Buddhist monks would lose their distinctiveness. I will return to this point below.

As regards the associative powers of nakedness with the *ājīvika* community, we may refer to *Vinaya* I 290–92 (BD IV 414–17) and *Vinaya* III 212 (BD II 45–7). Also these *Vinaya* passages beautifully reflect the Buddhist’s fear of nakedness. At *Vinaya* I 290–92, *bhikkhus* were *acīvara* or naked as they were letting their bodies get wet with rain. Because of their nakedness, they were being mistaken for *ājīvikas*. To avoid a recurrence of this mistaken identity, a faithful householder asked the Buddha whether she could donate “cloths for the rains” (*vassikasātīka*) to the *saṅgha*, condemning nakedness (*naggiya*) as being impure (*asuci*) and objectionable (*paṭikkūla*).<sup>38</sup> At *Vinaya* III 212 we read how a *bhikkhu* in the unfortunate event of being robbed and, as the narrative implies, being stripped of his robe (*achinnacīvara*), is exceptionally allowed to beg for a robe from a householder,<sup>39</sup> or if he is in the neighbourhood of a dwelling of fellow *bhikkhus* to ask for one there. In the absence of these options, he is instructed to cover himself with either a bed cover (*uttarattharaṇa*), a ground cover (*bhummattharaṇa*) or a mattress cover (*bhisicchavi*)<sup>40</sup> and if these options were also unavailable, he should cover himself with grass (*tīṇa*) or leaves (*paṇṇa*), in short, with anything as long as he does not come naked. If he does come naked, however, he commits an offence of wrongdoing. According to the accompanying introductory story, the event supposedly effecting these regulations was the misrecognition of certain *bhikkhus* to be *ājīvikas* as they, having been robbed of their robe, were wandering naked.

From these *Vinaya* passages prohibiting monks from wandering naked, we may safely deduce that the early Buddhist community conceptualized “nakedness” (*naggiya*) to be much more than the mere absence (*a-*) of robes (*cīvara*). For the Buddhist community nakedness was clearly not an accidental feature of being temporarily *acīvara*; nakedness was the robe or *cīvara* typifying ascetic communities other than itself. As such, these introductory stories throw light on the processes of othering of the early Buddhist ascetic community. They show how Buddhist *bhikkhus*, or at the very least the monk-editors of the Pali *Vinaya*, re-questioned and if necessary re-accommodated their own practices through reflection on the practices of their so-called ascetic other. When referring to the ascetic practice of nakedness, they temporarily “internalize” it, “experiment” with it, subsequently to distance themselves from the possibility altogether by marking it as a difference between themselves and *tiṭṭhiyas*. The difference thus marked is utterly significant as it starts to symbolize the very distinction between “us” and “them”. For, it is realized, if the “us” adopts the practice of nakedness it simply might become “them”.<sup>41</sup> In other words, there

38 Cf. Vin I 293 (BD IV 418), where nakedness in women is also declared “impure” (*asuci*), “abhorrent” (*jeguccha*), and “objectionable” (*paṭikkūla*).

39 The precept preceding this narrative prohibits a monk from asking a robe from a householder, unless he is a relative. Cf. *nissaggiya* (forfeiture) VI at Vin III 211 (BD II 45).

40 For I.B. Horner’s interpretation of these technical terms, see BD II 46 and 47, fn. 3, 4 and 1.

41 Cf. fn. 31.

is awareness of what William Scott Green calls “the possibility or the reality of otherness within”.<sup>42</sup> Conversely, the *cīvara* in the presence of the possibility of being *acīvara* has become an essential part of what constitutes the early Buddhist identity.

### Part III

#### *Acela(ka)* in the Pali *Vinaya*

This section analyses the denomination *acela(ka)*. It shows how also the presence of this metonymical denomination in the Pali *Vinaya* is reflective of the early Buddhist ascetic community’s processes of othering. More specifically, just as the Pali narratives discussed in the previous part, the term *acela(ka)* points to the fact that Buddhist *bhikkhus* reflected on the significance and value of their practice of wearing a robe (or better “cloth” or *cela*) in direct relation to the practice of their ascetic others of wandering naked. On a more general level, I wish to draw attention to the fact that the development and/or use of metonymies within a community, shows the dynamic, dialectic impact proximate others have on a community’s development and self-perception.

At *Vinaya* IV 91–2 a group of ascetic, proximate others (*titthiyā*) is denominated with the term “*acelaka*” (one without cloth).<sup>43</sup> The denomination *acela(ka)* is a typical metonymical denomination.<sup>44</sup> In terming a particular proximate other *acela(ka)* the Buddhist community is differentiating itself from that proximate other by highlighting in this denomination an ascetic custom (here, nakedness), expressed as the lack of a familiar practice among its members (the wearing of a “cloth” or *cela*).<sup>45</sup> The term *acela(ka)* therefore not only tells us a little about a real or imagined group of proximate others, but it also and mainly informs us how the monk-editors attached great importance to the practice of wearing a cloth of the Buddhist *bhikkhus*.

The reflexive, dialectical aspect of metonymical denominations has also been noted by Jonathan Z. Smith and William Scott Green in their cultural theory of

42 Green 1985: 50. Also quoted in Smith (1992) 2004: 232.

43 More specifically, the term *acelaka* is mentioned in *Pācittiya* XLI: “Whatever monk should give with his own hand solid food or soft food to a naked ascetic [*acelaka*] or to a wanderer [*paribbājaka*] or to a female wanderer [*paribbājikā*], there is an offence of expiation”. The *Padabhājanīya* gives for *acelaka*: “*yo koci paribbājakasamāpanno naggo*”, or “whoever being naked has reached (the stage of) a wanderer”. Cf. *Vin* IV 92; trans. I.B. Horner *BD* II 348–9. The term *acela(ka)* is used over 180 times in the *Suttapīṭaka*, which shows how the term was frequently used to refer to the early Buddhist’s ascetic others.

44 It may be noted that the reflections I make on the term *acela(ka)* in the Pali *Vinaya* are by extension also valid for all (sections of) early Indian ascetic communities who used the term to refer to one of their real or imagined proximate others.

45 My explanation of the metonymical denomination *acela(ka)* is based on Smith’s cultural analysis of “the ‘other’ represented metonymically”. He writes: “The metonymical model most frequently occurs in connection with naming. One group distinguishes itself from another by lifting up some cultural feature, expressed as the lack of some familiar cultural trait, the use of some unfamiliar cultural object (e.g. ‘fish-eaters’, ‘garlic-eaters’), the presence of some marked physical feature (e.g. ‘whites’, ‘blacks’), or the characterization of difference by naming the other as a nonhuman species” (Smith (1992) 2004: 232).

the other.<sup>46</sup> The latter, for instance, in stressing the importance of the semantic component of a society's theory of the other cuttingly remarked that "the terminology it [i.e. a society] invents to describe and classify those besides itself, along with the social action such language entails, are primarily clues to its self-understanding" (Green 1985: 49).

Green further noted that a society's theory of the other is "an exercise in caricature" for, a society "does not simply discover its others, it fabricates them" (Green 1985: 50). With respect to metonymies this is easily understood. In metonymies such as *acela(ka)* only one aspect of the proximate other's life is highlighted that, moreover, comes to represent this group of *titthiyas* (here the supposed fact that they were "without cloth" and thus wandering naked). In the words of William Scott Green a society fabricates its proximate other by:

selecting, isolating, and emphasizing an aspect of another's people's life and making it symbolize their difference. To evoke the significant disparity of which otherness is composed, the symbol must correspond powerfully to the naming society's sense of its own distinctiveness .... To be revealing and meaningful, it must reach inside the culture of the people who employ it, correlate to some piece of themselves that they believe prominently displays who they are, and induce response, perhaps fear or disgust, but also perhaps envy or respect. The construction of a theory of the other thus involves a double metonymy and a double distortion. In creating its others, a society confuses some part of its neighbor with its neighbor, and a piece of itself with itself, and construes each in terms of the other. (Green 1985: 50).

Bearing in mind these gained notions that through metonymies the proximate other is not just referred to but also "fabricated", and that through them a double dialectical process of (self-)definition is taking place, we can comprehend the additional value of metonymies to both one-to-one and generic denominations. Through metonymies the possibility or the significance of an alternative practice or an internal ambiguity is reflected upon. Through these metonymies, alternative praxes and values are taken to the very boundaries of a community and experimented with. The result of such an "experiment" is that at the end of the exercise the practice or value in question will either be internalized and further adopted or, alternatively, rejected and marked as "other". It is important to underscore that the practice which comes to be rejected and marked as "other" contributes as much to the "making-off" of a community as the one which is internalized and adopted. The only difference being that the ongoing definition of a community through rejection of what is so-called "other" negatively takes shape, effecting differences between oneself and one's proximate other. These effected differences are highly significant. For, "... difference is rarely something simply to be noted; it is, most often, something in which one has a stake. Above all, it is a political matter" (Smith (1985) 2004: 252). This is also true with respect to the processes of othering of the early Buddhist ascetic

46 See especially Smith (1992) 2004: 232–3.

community. The importance of the differences marked between Buddhists and non-Buddhists during processes of othering lies in the fact that they develop specific power relations. The negotiated differences start to represent typifying features on the basis of which the Buddhist community can distance itself from its proximate other. And it is on the very ground of such formulated differences that the proximate other will be perceived and consequently treated as “other” by the Buddhist community. A proximate other who desires to join the Buddhist ascetic *saṅgha* will first have to give up his “otherness” to be able to become a Buddhist mendicant and to be recognized as such. Several regulations within the Pali *Vinaya* can be understood within this framework, namely as aiming to dismantle the “otherness” of candidates desiring the going forth. We can think, for instance, of the small regulations for *aññatitthiyapubbas* (those who previously belonged to a different ascetic community) such as “if an *aññatitthiyapubba* comes naked (*naggo āgacchati*) a robe belonging to a preceptor should be looked about for”.<sup>47</sup> The four-month probation period (*parivāsa*) asked of certain *aññatitthiyapubbas* may also be understood from this perspective.<sup>48</sup>

To conclude, just like the discussed introductory stories referring to supposed practices of proximate others, the metonymy *acela(ka)* is also reflective of the processes of othering of the early Buddhist ascetic community. Using the term *acela(ka)* to refer to some (groups of) ascetic, proximate others, the monk-editors show how they negotiated a “Buddhist” identity in direct relation to these proximate others. Further, the use of the denomination *acela(ka)* reflects how, in the existing reality – or in the imagined possibility – of nakedness as an ascetic practice, the importance of their own practice of wearing a cloth comes to be articulated. Finally, in using the term *acela(ka)*, the difference between the practice of wearing a cloth and the ascetic practice of being naked comes to be marked as a typifying difference between themselves and their ascetic, proximate others.

## Conclusion

That ascetic contemporaries of the early Indian Buddhist *bhikkhus* were the latter’s – to a higher or lesser degree – “proximate other” is now, I hope, abundantly clear. In the reality of being more than one, the early Buddhist community continuously needed to (re)negotiate its separate identity and to establish and (re)value its ascetic practices in direct relation to (those of) their ascetic,

47 Vin I 71, 22–4: *sace bhikkhave aññatitthiyapubbo naggo āgacchati, upajjhāyamūlakam cīvaram pariyesitabbam*. Directly following this instruction, another such regulation for *aññatitthiyapubbas* may be found, Vin I 71, 24–5: *sace acchinnakeso āgacchati, samgho apaloketabbo bhaṇḍukammāya*. (“If he comes without the hair of his head cut off, the Order should be asked for permission for shaving it close”, BD IV 89).

48 Vin I 69 (BD IV 85): *yo bhikkhave añño pi aññatitthiyapubbo imasmim dhammavinaye ākaṅkhati pabbajam, ākaṅkhati upasampadam, tassa cattāro māse parivāso dātabbo*. A notable exception to this four-month probation is given to fire-worshipping *jaṭīlakas* on the alleged basis that they are *kammavādin* and *kiriyavādin* and to *aññatitthiyapubbas* who are Sakyans by birth (Cf. Vin I 71; BD IV 89). Be that as it may, it is noteworthy that the exception is granted on the basis of a shared, and what must have been important, similarity between the *aññatitthiyapubba* and the followers of the Buddha.

proximate others. Othering was an important and dynamic process underlying the development of the early Buddhist ascetic community.

Thanks to our examination of the Pali *Vinaya*'s multiple terms for ascetic others; our particular attention to the term *acela(ka)*; and our close reading and analysis of a selected group of *Vinaya* passages, we were able to identify some traces of the early Buddhist ascetic community's processes of othering. We pointed out how the presence of a wide array of terms referring to the early Buddhist *bhikkhus*' ascetic others, as well as the stock phrase *seyyathāpi tittiyā*, are reflective of the dynamic, reflexive impact proximate others exerted on the development of the early Buddhist ascetic community. Further, we have seen how in the normative body of the Pali *Vinaya*, both the metonymy *acela(ka)* and the references to real or imagined practices of proximate others, are reflective of the early Buddhist community's ongoing process of othering. More specifically, they showed how early Buddhist *bhikkhus*, or at the very least the monk-editors of the Pali *Vinaya*, reflected on the significance of their practices of wearing a cloth (*cela*) or a "Buddhist" robe (*cīvara*) and of carrying an alms-bowl (*patta*) by considering the value of alternative practices of their so-called ascetic, proximate others. When observing the (real or imagined) possibility of not wearing any cloth (*acela*) or robe (*acīvara*) and, hence, to wander naked, the monk-editors revalued their own practice of wearing a cloth or robe and emphasized the importance to Buddhist *bhikkhus* of observing it. Otherwise, a meaningful difference between themselves and their proximate other could not be guaranteed. In their process of othering, they marked the difference (whether simply observed or negotiated) between themselves and their proximate other as a signifying difference. It is on the basis of such noted differences that the early Buddhist *bhikkhu*'s proximate other was related to and treated as "other". Similarly, we have seen how the monk-editors stressed the importance to Buddhist *bhikkhus* of adhering to the practice of carrying a begging-bowl by considering the value of the alternative practice of their ascetic, proximate others of not using a bowl (*apatta*).

One final point may be made explicit: when, during their processes of othering, Buddhist *bhikkhus* were considering the value of the practices of their so-called proximate others, they were, so to speak, temporarily "internalizing" them and "experimenting" with them. At such moments they were, to use a Pali *Vinaya* phrase, *seyyathāpi tittiyā*, or just like their ascetic, proximate others. In other words, the processes of othering of the early Buddhist ascetic community entailed an ongoing flirtation with the other.

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