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Pleasure and Fear: On the Uneasy Relation between Indic Buddhist Monasticism and Art

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Abstract: When monastics of the Indic North and Northwest around the turn of the Common Era made the decision to introduce art into monasteries, current cultural assumptions regarding the aesthetic experience of such objects, which were axiomatically negated by Buddhist ideology, led to certain confrontations in law and praxis and an attempt to resolve these within certain monastic legal codes (*vinaya*) redacted during this period. Tracing the historical relation between monasticism and art in this context, this paper focuses on two such uneasy relations. The first deals with an opposition between the worldly aesthetics of pleasure associated with art and fashion and the aesthetics of asceticism as a representation of monasticism's renunciate ideal. The second considers the aesthetics of fear associated with images of deities, the rejection of such objects as mere signs, and the resulting acts of theft and iconoclasm enacted upon them. It will show that resolution to both was sought in a particular semiotic which negated the aesthetic experience of such objects and rendered them signs with a significance that accorded with Buddhist ideology. Yet the solution remained incomplete, with issues arising when the same ideology was applied to monasticism's own representation in the art of monasteries, stūpas and Buddha-images.

Keywords: Indic Buddhism; monasticism; art; aesthetics; semiotics; monastic law (*vinaya*); iconoclasm; figural imagery; Buddha-images; stūpas; fashion; pleasure; fear; humour

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1. Introduction

> Another was reclined on a windowsill,
> Sleeping, her slender body bent like a bow,
> Seeming, with her beautiful necklace dangling down,
> Like a *śālabhañjikā* carved on a gateway.[1]

In educing pleasure here, it is of consequence that Aśvaghoṣa chose to avail himself of art as metaphor. For when he composed this verse of the *Buddhacarita*, somewhere in the Indic North and Northwest in the early Common Era,[2] the voluptuous image of the *śālabhañjikā* ('she who breaks the *śāla* branch') was a popular subject of sculptural art, adorning the architecture of Buddhist monastic sites across these regions and beyond (Figures 1 and 2).[3] Yet in beholding the figure, he descried the very same allure that would have broken Prince Siddhartha's resolve to depart the palace and renounce the world had he not espied the ugly truth behind the sleeping courtieress' beauty.[4] Contained within his simile, therefore, is not merely a demurral of the aesthetics of pleasure as a hindrance to Buddhism's telos; it is an ostensive critique also of the very presence of such art within monastic contexts. But his is not a total negation: as a poet he fully appreciates the value of artistic appeal, whereas as a monk he knows art to be mere representation, a shallow sign concealing a deeper truth whose unveiling would serve to render any such aesthetic inconsequential. As he famously reflects in the closing verses of the *Saundarananda*: his poetry (*kāvya*), though gratifying in its art, is mere artifice (*vyāja*), and so not purposed for pleasure (*rati*) but for the peaceful (*śamika*) truth (*tattva*) of liberation (*mokṣa*), 'just as a rather bitter medicine is mixed with honey' (*pātum tiktam ivauṣadham madhuyutam*).[5]

Figure 1. Red sandstone *toraṇa* with a *śālabhañjikā*, c. 1st century CE, Mathura, India[6].

Figure 2. Schist relief with a *śālabhañjikā*, c. 2nd–3rd century CE, Northwest Pakistan[7].

This bittersweetness which characterises Aśvaghoṣa's interaction was by no means his alone, and echoes, rather, a prevailing uneasiness within his milieu towards the relation between monasticism and art. Axiomatic to Buddhist thought is the premise that the variously attractive or repellent sensations of pleasure (*kāma*), passion (*rāga*), desire (*chanda*), affection (*prema*), craving (*tṛṣṇā*), grief (*śoka*), fear (*bhaya*), and so forth, should be totally restrained if a monk or nun is to be detached from worldly affectivity.[8] Whilst this principle was to be applied in practice to all sensory objects, it does not in the earliest stratum of Buddhist literature appertain to the phenomenon of art specifically, which is entirely absent from that corpus. Such a concern with 'aesthetics'[9] was instead to become particularly salient in discourses devised closer to the turn of the first millennium; namely, when monks and nuns had for the first time rooted themselves more permanently in monasteries and had decided to beautify these spaces with decorative and figural art.[10] For the coeval cultural episteme, however, such objects had deeply embedded undertones which were quite at odds with monasticism's ascetic ideal. Figural imagery was perceived as participating of a dangerous agency and potency, provoking not only such emotional responses as erotic pleasure, as with such depictions of beautiful women as the *śālabhañjikā*, but also fear when before images of *devas*, *nāgas*, *yakṣas* and alike, whose representations (*pratimā*) were experienced by the 'god-fearing' as identical to the subjects (*pramā*) themselves. Rejecting both the aesthetic immediacy and ontological assumptions of this interplay, monastics rendered such objects signs, rented them from the normative semantic trajectories they mediated, and reendowed them with a significance via postulates of their own. In doing so, they sought to reenvisage the cultural consumption of such phenomena, which thence came to be regarded in a sense that certainly approaches the notion of 'art' in certain fundamental regards.[11] To not apathetically recognise a fabricated object as such was thus viewed as pathetic delusion:

> Just as when an artist paints,
> A fear-inducing form of a *yakṣa*,
> And scares himself,
> So is it also for the fool in *saṃsāra*.[12]

A semiotic of this kind was purposely designed to resolve tensions in the confrontation with art, itself yielding fertile metaphorical ground to illustrate the representational over the aesthetic ambits of phenomenal experience. But it also gave rise to certain paradoxes, especially when it came to the art and aesthetics of the monastery or to such signifiers as the stūpa or Buddha-image which were treated in ritual manners that ostensibly differed little from other cults. The situation thus demanded an acute awareness and deliberative orchestration of the relation between that peculiar performative practice of monasticism and art, both within and without the controlled confines of the monastery; an exigency that was ultimately met in the adjudications of monastic legal codes (*vinaya*).

In the following, I will deal with two such cases of uneasy relations between monasticism and art from certain monastic groups' (*nikāya*) legal codes, which, I suggest, underwent redaction in the Indic North and Northwest around the turn of the Common Era. The first concerns a tension between the aesthetics of pleasure aroused by decorative art and fashion within the monastery and the aesthetics of asceticism more at home with monasticism's renunciate ideal. The second treats the aesthetics of fear associated with images of deities without the monastery and certain aberrant acts of symbolic violence monks enacted upon them, with iconoclasm being the most agitational. Resolution to both was sought in a unifying semiotic which simultaneously enclosed aesthesis and unclosed semiosis in the apperception of art, effectively robbing the affective power immediately felt in the conventional consumption of such objects by rendering them mere signs mediating a meaning that accorded with Buddhist ideology and perverted prevailing assumptions. Irresolution remained, however, with issues arising when the same ideology was self-reflexively applied to monasticism's own representation in art, a matter managed in legal discourse with recourse to irony and satire.

Before proceeding with these two cases, there are certain unavoidable questions of historicity at stake which need to be addressed. Various forms of art were introduced into monastic contexts at specific times and in specific places, as evidenced by the material remains of art in monasteries, and these engendered differing responses, as revealed by monastic legal codes and other works. With the purpose of bringing into closer conversation, and so historicise, what is observed in each group of sources, it is therefore necessary to preface the main discussion with a word on the legal codes employed in this study and the degree to which they can be brought to bear on the question of the specific relation between monasticism and art in the North and Northwest as proposed.

2. On the Relation between Monasticism and Art in Legal Codes (*Vinaya*)

Considerations of the relation between monasticism and art are of course not entirely new to scholarship and since the early 20th century several explorations into the issue have been conducted, primarily within monastic legal codes and narrative literature. A perusal of these studies, however, reveals the majority to be highly doxographical; for the most part simply listing a select few passages which deal primarily with painting (Coomaraswamy 1930, pp. 42–47; Làlou 1928; Soper 1950). Despite these having been more recently developed with reflections on the potential functions of art, whether aesthetic, cultic, or didactic, scholarship today still suffers somewhat from the long-standing position which presumes an incommensurable trifurcation of the purposes,[13] and as a result there is neither a full appreciation of Buddhist perspectives on the issue nor indeed of the forces art exerted historically on monastic ideology.

It is, needless to say, rather difficult to assess overall how art shaped monasticism and monasticism art. And this has much to do to with the nature of the sources available to us. Although an abundance of art excavated from monasteries renders the import of their relation incontrovertible, it reveals little of the processes by which it was introduced to the monastery nor indeed of the manner in which it was consumed thereafter. Such details are retained literarily in monastic legal codes, all of which have something to say on the matter. What becomes apparent from these sources collectively is that art was a pronounced determinant from a very early stage in the development of the monastic institution; and no doubt in a period prior to what archaeological findings tell us was the advent thereof around the 1st century BCE. They moreover reveal that its deployment was anything but a foregone conclusion, intimating certain ideological tensions between monasticism and art whose relation consequently demanded codification at all levels, from creation, to content and consumption. But in dealing with these sources too we encounter problems; foremost because the majority are only partially extant in Pali and Sanskrit manuscripts or in Chinese and Tibetan translations which date no earlier than the 4th century CE (and more often than not much later).[14] These texts thus potentially reflect the state of monastic law up until the date of a given recension, although little concrete can be said about the precise historical conditions in which they were antecedently employed. Such an unwieldy problem shall not be resolved in these few pages. Nevertheless, it is possible to take some tentative steps towards partial resolution, to the extent, at least, that the narrow topos of art affords.

Many of the legal codes available to us today notably derive from monastic groups that are known from epigraphy and Chinese travelogues to have had a long-standing presence in the Indic North and Northwest from the 1st century CE (at the very latest). These include, namely, the Sarvāstivādins and Mūlasarvāstivādins, Kāśyapīyas, Mahīśāsakas and Dharmaguptakas of the Sthavira lineage, as well as the Mahāsāmghikas (Albery 2020a, pp. 329–78; Kieffer-Pülz 2000, pp. 293–302). Little to no attempt has been made hitherto to localise these texts, neither in this historical context nor otherwise. (And it cannot be ruled out, one must add, that the trans-regionality of monastic groups at that time undoubtedly shaped the codes as we have them today.) That is with perhaps but one exception: in the case of the legal codes of the Sarvāstivādins and Mūlasarvāstivādins, we are by now on safer ground since these texts have been shown to bear several direct nexus to the in-

scriptions and material culture of the region.[15] Although those of other monastic groups have not received quite the same systematic treatment, a consideration of references to art in these works does remedy the situation somewhat, exposing certain minutiae which exhibit the influence of the same cultural idiosyncrasies.[16] Furthermore, these legal codes do not offer a uniform set of perspectives on art and their comparative study hence provides us with the opportunity to nuance our understanding of the institutionally specific debates monasticism underwent in its choice to adopt it.

An extensive (albeit incomplete) search for various forms of art in these sources yields numerous passages which afford the possibility of ascertaining the manner and relative degrees to which it affected monasticism.[17] At the lower end of the spectrum, the **Mahīśāsakavinaya* 彌沙塞部和醯五分律 exhibits a limited influence, mirroring in both scope and content much of what is to be found in the *Theravādavinaya*. In instances where these two corpora do treat art, one moreover finds that the subjects are fundamentally shared by the legal codes of all other monastic groups, which can accordingly be deemed some of the earlier reflections on the relation between monasticism and art (of which three cases will be treated in greater detail below). At the upper end stand the **Sarvāstivādavinaya* 十誦律 and *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, which contain the most numerous and indeed diverse references to art, but these are closely followed by the **Dharmaguptakavinaya* 四分律 and the *Mahāsāmghikavinaya* 摩訶僧祇律, all of whose artistic concerns bespeak what is observed materially in the North and Northwest in several respects. These latter four monastic groups had therefore developed a keen awareness of the issues posed by art to monasticism and emendations to their legal codes constitute a concerted attempt to coordinate how the two would interact.

Within these texts one thus encounters a vast array of regulations treating the issue. There are rules governing the various forms of paintings and sculptures on the architecture of monasteries and stūpas, stipulating who should create it, what should and shouldn't be depicted, where it should be placed, how it should be maintained, by whom it should be consumed, and to what end. There are rules determining monastic fashion and the art on manifold objects handled by monks and nuns, including bags, buoys, flags, furniture, jewellery, robes, seals, toys and upholstery. And most commonly there are rules concerning the consumption of figural imagery, both within the monastery and beyond its walls, which was regarded as having the power to induce fancy (*priya*), instigate fear (*bhaya*) or, preferably, inspire faith (*śraddhā*).

Common to all legal codes are three main artistic concerns, all of which are related within 'precedents' (*nidāna*) narrating the conditions for the codification of a specific precept. Two describe the *pātayantika*[18] offences of a monk giving robes to a nun to whom he is unrelated (*ajñāti*),[19] after Udāyin renders a sexual image on one nun's robe,[20] and of nuns visiting royal palaces, picture galleries, gardens, groves, or lotus ponds,[21] after the infamous group of six (*ṣaḍvārgikā*) nuns do so and are criticised for consuming worldly pleasures,[22] for inadvertently sexualising themselves before the laity,[23] or for behaving like heterodox women known for frequenting picture galleries in temples of the gods, among other locales.[24] The third is less a specific rule and more a general ban (with varying degrees of severity in the case of infraction) on monks and nuns from making figural, or more specifically sexual imagery, whether it be painted or sculpted on buildings or furniture.[25]

All three rules were devised in direct response to the cultural association between art and the aesthetics of pleasure, being concerned with either pornography[26] on monastic architecture and attire or with the consumption of visual attractions generally regarded as the ostentatious domains of worldly desires. Such art in these cases was thus overtly disassociated from monasticism. Of course, it was to be eventually and indeed widely adopted by monastics, as the abundance of art in monasteries makes plain, but deliberatively so also, as is revealed by certain exceptions to these rules.

Thus, in a gloss to the prohibition against nuns visiting picture galleries, the *Bhikṣuṇīvibhaṅga* of the **Dharmaguptakavinaya* further states that fully ordained monks (*bhikṣu*)

and nuns (*bhikṣuṇī*), as well as trainees (*śikṣamānā*) and novices (*śramaṇera*, *śramaṇerī*), are indeed allowed to visit such spaces, albeit with certain provisos:

> If for the affairs of the community (*saṃghakarma*) or the affairs of the stūpa (*stūpakarma*) one[27] goes to view a picture gallery[28] wishing to take the method of imitation[29], it is not an offense.[30]

A legal exception of this kind was evidently designed to give credence to the application of art in monasteries and stūpas, on which basis it can be dated no earlier than the 1st century BCE. It moreover imparts that monastic art was stylistically modelled after the art of local picture galleries, in an effort, no doubt, to reflect the tastes and sensibilities of the specific society for which it was intended.

Indeed, this latter principle is reflected in the types of exceptional forms of imagery that came to be permitted in monastic contexts. In the *Theravādavinaya*, four works (*kamma*) are listed as acceptable for monastery buildings, including garlands, creepers, *makara*-teeth, and a certain 'five-fold cloth' design (*pañcapaṭika*).[31] Again in the **Dharmaguptakavinaya*, several subjects are prescribed for representation in sculpture and painting, including hands, circles, images of Maheśvara, grapevines, flowers, and five colours, all of which were used to decorate the architecture of monasteries[32] and stūpas[33] or to indicate possession of meditation-cave retreats[34] or personal items such as bedding and seating.[35] And the *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* permits five kinds of paintings for monasteries and stūpas, including images of elder monks, grapevines, geese, corpses, and mountains and trees.[36] Such lists can hardly encapsulate the total variety of images found in the material remains of monasteries and apart from more obvious Buddhist symbols and icons (i.e., lotuses, monks and corpses[37]) it is hard to make sense of their significance.

The choice to specifically include grapevines (葡萄蔓, Skt. *drākṣālatā*) in the lists of the latter two monastic groups does nevertheless strike one as particularly relevant to the Indic Northwest.[38] As many scholars have shown, there is an abundance of archaeological, botanical, epigraphic, and textual evidence from the third millennium BCE through to the present day, which points not only to the unique and long-standing cultural significance of grapes and wine to the region but the adoption of this culture into Buddhist monasticism in the early Common Era. Relief art from stūpa sites of the period regularly depicts grapevines and figures engaged in wine production and drinking (Tanabe 2022), excavations in Swat, Pakistan, have identified grape pressing and wine making technologies in close association with monastic sites (Olivieri 2013, p. 191), and there are rules prescribing something of the (necessarily abstemious) dimensions of the production process in the **Sarvāstivādavinaya* and *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*[39] also. It is therefore now generally accepted that monks were actively engaged in wine production and in organising wine drinking festivals, which have been variously associated with the cults of Dionysus, the *yakṣas* Hārītī and Pāñcika, or the god Indra.[40] Presuming that the imitation of grapevines in art would have been significant foremost to monastics in the Northwest, one is compelled to conclude that the presence of such imagery in these legal codes is a direct result of the culture of this region and that to a certain extent the codes as we have them today were redacted in precisely this context.

The reason for these attempts to strictly control imagery was because many people would come to visit the monastery, just as they would picture galleries or temples of deities. In competition with these other tourist destinations, as it were, monastics were forced to maintain an aesthetic which at once excluded certain imagery from their visual repertoire, in order that art correctly convey monasticism's ascetic message,[41] whilst ensuring it remained appealing to the local populace.

3. Aesthetics of Pleasure: Art within the Monastery

In his studies of the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, Gregory Schopen has convincingly demonstrated that the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivādins of the Indic North and Northwest had wholeheartedly adopted the materialistic aesthetic of the urban elite. The art, architecture and envi-

rons of the monastery constituted a central component of this, with monks employing the very vocabulary of erotic pleasure walks (*vihāra*) and gardens (*ārāma*) to denote monasteries, which were often built within gardens and groves at the fringes of urban areas, carefully cultivating these spaces with various flora, fauna and water features, and deploying ornate art to render the monastery a beautiful place and ensure a pleasurable experience to its visitors (Schopen 2006, p. 487ff). Monasticism at this time, he argues, was therefore not of the austere variety one may expect from an ascetically inclined system but was decidedly materialistic, with its ideology and praxes resultingly redefined. He concluded that passages concerning art and aesthetics in this legal code, "all in one way or another tell the same story" (Schopen 2007, p. 314); namely, that beautiful art served to attract the patronage of wealthy donors, and especially women. I found such discourse to be descriptive of the *Sarvāstivādavinaya* too.[42] And it would seem, therefore, that the monks to have redacted the codes of this (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda monastic group were unabashed in their affirmation of the relation between monasticism and art in their aesthetic. But this is not the whole story.

Such a world-avowing monastic aesthetic posed a challenge to another disavowing ascetic aesthetic closer to the heart of Buddhist ideology, a battle which is salient foremost in the discourses of the *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*. As with other legal codes, here too we observe the influence of art on monasticism, with monasteries and stūpas formulaically described as having reliefs and carvings (彫文刻鏤), various decorations (種種嚴飾), and the aforementioned five kinds of paintings (五種彩畫). Unlike (Mūla-)Sarvāstivādin discourse, however, these passages are inserted not to foreground the generation of patronage but to introduce certain bad behaviours of the more artistically minded monks, whose actions disincline potential patrons and so result in the determination of rules controlling monastic comportment, fashion and furniture. Thus, within five narrative precedents, a member of the laity is described as coming to visit the monastery and in each case is taken by one of the infamous 'group of six' (*ṣaḍvārgika*) monks to see the art and fashionable furniture of their dwellings, whose beauty in each case creates an issue.

The first concerns the *saṃghāvaśeṣa*[43] offence of having physical contact with women,[44] describing how Udāyin leads the wife of a Brahmin friend of his to the monastery's living quarters (despite women being forbidden), shows her the decorative carvings and green floor, and in a secluded spot gropes her.[45] In another offence of the same class on speaking depravity to women,[46] Udāyin invites an impoverished prostitute inside the monastery, shows her its various paintings, asks whether she finds them beautiful, and, when she agrees, has her pose in sexually suggestive positions.[47] One *niḥsargikapātayantika*[48] offence which prohibits monks from asking householders for a robe[49] describes how Upananda, cultivated in art and fashion alike, shows the master of donations, Āvarta, the beautiful reliefs, carvings, decorations, five kinds of paintings, beryl floor and furnishings in the monastery, and then attempts to coerce him into giving up his beautifully woven robe.[50] And in the case of two *pātayantika* offences restricting the consumption of excessive furniture[51] and cotton upholstery[52], Nanda and Upananda together take the son of King Prasenajit on the day of the *uposadha* to look at monastery and view its art,[53] saying:

> "Prince, look at these pillars, rafters and ridgepoles, the columns, brackets, capitals and crossbars, the reliefs, carvings, and various paintings". Next, they came to the living quarters and saw the green floor, the well-arranged bed with *tūla* (cotton) fabric cushions, pillows placed at each end, and covered with white wool. Having seen this, [the prince] asked: "To whom do these belong?"
>
> "They are ours", they replied.
>
> "They are very beautiful and inappropriate for you, Venerable Ones", the prince said.
>
> "If they are inappropriate for us then who should own them?" they replied.
>
> "This is the suitable attire of a king, prince, or minister", replied the prince.

> "Are we not princes?" they retorted, "Had the Exalted One not renounced, he would have become a wheel-turning ruler, king of the four continents, and all of you would be our subjects. But the Exalted One did not take pleasure in this station, and so renounced, attained Buddhahood, and became a Dharma-wheel king. We, therefore, are Dharma-wheel princes, and even if the attire were to exceed this, it would still be suitable; not to mention such vulgar items". When the prince heard this, he was ashamed and said nothing.[54]

Preserved in this passage is the kind of debate that monastics in the Indic North and Northwest underwent in their confrontation with art, a discourse all but effaced in other coeval legal codes for which such aesthetics are presented as normative. What we can see here is a battle between the aesthetic performance of two worldviews: the first is that of the monk, who, in the manner of materialistic monasticism current in the region, was quite akin in his taste for beautiful art and fashion to a prince; the second is that of the ascetic, being one who has renounced such aesthetic objects of worldly pleasures. This attempt by Nanda and Upananda to transfer the power of the Buddha's asceticism into a worldly aestheticism is of course unsuccessful and results in a ruling which restricts the monastic consumption of such objects, albeit not the presence of art.

Such uneasiness is not limited to the art of monasteries but is extended to stūpas also, with several rules permitting certain architectural features of such sites, including paintings in niches, gardens, reliefs, carvings and paintings on the façade, as well as particular modes of worship which together contributed to the aesthetics of these sites, such as the only known Mahāsāmghika stupa in the Northwest at Wardak, Afghanistan (Errington 2017, p. 203). In each case, however, a monk is quoted as questioning the very purpose of art:

> If [a monk] says: "The Exalted One has already eliminated greed (*rāga*), anger (*dveṣa*), and ignorance (*moha*), what use is a *stūpa* [. . .] he only decorates himself for pleasure [. . .] what use are gardens of flowers and fruits [. . .] what use is there in a beautiful building to make offerings [. . .] what use is there in worshipping with banners and canopies [. . .] what use is there in worshipping with dancing and music?", he transgresses the *vinaya* and the results of this action are severe.[55]

Stūpas are here envisaged as sites of multisensorial experience, with visual, olfactory, tactile, and aural stimuli contributing to a frequenters' pleasure. The problem was that such aesthetic phenomena, when mistakenly taken as representative of asceticism, ran the risk of conveying a message contrary to that ideal. Critiques to take this line, however, did not result in a prohibition on art but in the punishment of one who would point out the discrepancies between the opposing aesthetics. Monasticism as shaped by art thus turned out the victor. Nonetheless, the very presence of such responses in the *Mahāsāmghikavinaya* points at the basal uneasiness regarding the utility of art and other such contributors to the aesthetics of monastic sites when the types of emotions derived from them are to be outright negated in doctrine. The concern, therefore, is not only that art inspires affectivity but that it also conveys the wrong message—that is misrepresents the monastics' -ism. In such cases, however, the tension was left unresolved and monastic groups of the Indic North and Northwest decided that art and the aesthetics of pleasure were to be of greater utility in inviting donative acts than the wholesale pursuit of asceticism which would ultimately result in their repudiation.

4. Aesthetics of Fear: Art without the Monastery

It was at this time also that South Asia bore witness to a great cultural shift towards figural imagery, with representations of deities and spirits from the Graeco, Indic and Iranic pantheons as well as portraiture of rulers appearing for the first time in coinage and sculpture. As Robert DeCaroli has detailed, these were by no means the earliest forms of figural imagery, and texts dating from the late Vedic Period make clear that such art had been a

widespread feature of culture for a very long time indeed. It as a result held deeply embedded associations in society which widely assumed a necessary identity to exist between an image (*pratimā*) and its subject (*pramā*); the two, namely, were considered to be one and the same, and images were consequently held to possess an inherent agency with the power to grant worldly ends, whether health, longevity, or wealth. Brahmanical, Buddhist, and Jain soteriological systems of the early Common Era widely rejected this identity between image and subject, viewing the worldly practices related to them as inconsequential to their ultimate purpose (DeCaroli 2015, esp. 54ff). Such a critique likely resulted in the initial phase of "aniconism" observed in early Buddhist art. Yet it did not prevent the Buddhists from eventually fabricating cultic images of their own, with the first representations of Bodhisattvas and Buddhas produced at this time. Although Buddhist traditions would eventually abandon the premises of their critique, and so ultimately reendow images with agency,[56] the choice to adopt imagery in the present historical context gave rise to no short amount of uneasiness among monastics and resolution was resultingly required.

As a point of departure for ascertaining the views of the Buddhists of the Indic North and Northwest of this period, it is worth beginning with an oft-cited passage from the popular episode of the Arhat Upagupta's encounter with Māra, which is found in the *Aśokāvadāna* in Sanskrit and Chinese[57], in the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣā* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論,[58] and in the **Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā Dṛṣṭāntapaṅkti* 大莊嚴論經[59] of the Gandharan Kumāralāta (fl. 3rd century CE). To briefly summarise the latter, we are told that Upagupta, whilst seated in meditation, longs to see the form of the Buddha as he had lived and so asks Māra to manifest his appearance. Māra dons the costume of the Buddha reluctantly, however, out of anxiety that Upagupta would mistakenly worship him as he would the Buddha himself, an act whose force would destroy Māra. But upon seeing the Buddha's representation, Upagupta nonetheless falls before Māra's feet in prostration:

> At that time, King Māra said: "You fall with five limbs on the ground and worship me; why did you say, 'I won't honour you'?"
>
> "I'm not worshipping you", Venerable [Upagupta] said to Māra, "and I have not reneged on my promise also. Just as when clay or wood are used to fashion a Buddha-image, which men and gods of the world all worship, they at that moment do not honour the clay and wood but wish to worship the Buddha; [likewise] I worship the representation[60] of the Buddha and not the form[61] of Māra".[62]

This analogy, which likens Upagupta's worship of Māra to that of a Buddha image in clay or wood (or indeed images of deities as the *Aśokāvadāna* goes[63]), has naturally been the focus of much discussion and scholars are in general agreement as to its fundamental purport. It imparts, quite plainly, that representations of the Buddha were considered to be nothing more than the materials out of which they were made[64] and thus unrelated in any necessary way to the Buddha himself, neither in essence nor in substance and thus quite unlike relics in this regard. They were therefore not the final object but were tools to aid practitioners in the ritual practice of remembering the buddha (*buddhānusmṛti*),[65] serving to produce a mental concept (*saṃjñā*) of his physical form, the true object of veneration. To that extent images were to be regarded as instrumental signs of recollection: iconic, insofar as they resemble their subject, but doubly indexical as well in indicating the Buddha's former presence whilst further affirming, from the perspective of the doctrine of *nirvāṇa*, his absence also (Strong 1992, p. 109ff; Rotman 2009, p. 170ff; DeCaroli 2015, p. 122ff). However, a fundamental aspect of this semiotic ideology regarding figural imagery has gone entirely unnoticed in scholarship. It had far-reaching implications for the development of monastic law also, dictating the concrete manners in which Buddha-images were valued[66] as well as how monastics were to deal with images of deities outside of their pantheon.

In (Mūla-)Sarvāstivādin legal discourse specifically, we encounter several narratives detailing how monks treated and should treat images of deities. One addendum to the *pārājika*[67] offence of theft[68] in the **Sarvāstivādavinaya* names several sources whence a monk should and should not acquire his robes, and in one case we read the following:

> The monks took the down, *karpāsa* (cotton), and white woollen clothing in the temple of the deities. The temple guard said: "Virtuous Ones, these items of clothing belong to the temple, do not take them!"
>
> "Do these clay and wooden deities have use for the items of clothing?" the monks said.
>
> "Then I will also take the items of the stūpas of the Buddha and the Arhats!" said the temple guard.
>
> They informed the Buddha of the case, who said: "Henceforth, it is not permitted to take the down, *karpāsa*, and white woollen clothing in temples of the gods. If one takes them, one incurs a *sthūlātyaya*[69]".[70]

This ruling belongs to a time in which the stūpa cult was competing with other deity cults and thus likely precedes the introduction of the Buddha image. However, the semiotic logic that negated the ontology of the latter is the same, albeit here deployed in relation to images of deities, leading some monks to regard it as acceptable to steal from their empty shells (as they understood them). For the temple guard, however, it is made clear that images of the deities did indeed have a use for the items of clothing in which they were ritually swathed. And one cannot help but discern a certain humour in this passage, for the irony of the guard's retort to the mocking position expressed by the monks self-reflexively points also at the paradoxical relationship they themselves shared with the stūpa, a signifier which was treated 'as if' it had a use for such items. Satire, it seems, was the only resort the monks had available to them in coping with their patent hypocrisy.

Theft of items from images of deities was therefore banned, no doubt to avoid any self-defeating results of the monastics' own semiotic. But viewing images as merely clay and wood was presumably one among many important strategies for Buddhism to compete with other deity cults, whose temples, as we saw earlier, were also houses to beguiling art which attracted visitations from monks and nuns. Yet here it is not the aesthetics of pleasure which comes to be stressed. When before an image of a deity, monastics had rather to contend with the aesthetics of fear, an element drawn out in another two related passages from the same legal code:

> In the kingdom of Śrāvastī, there was an image of a deity which could grant people's wishes. One householder, who was seeking what he desired, got what he wished for, and out of happiness took some white wool to wrap the body of the deity's image. There, a monk named Kālananda, who had great power and did not fear the deity's image, snatched the deity's wool, and carried it off. Later he had some doubts: "Will I not incur a *pārājika*?" He informed the Buddha of the case, who said:
>
> "You have not incurred a *pārājika*, rather a *sthūlātyaya*".
>
> There was an image of a deity which could protect people's bodies. One householder who was seeking what he desired, got what he wished for, and out of happiness took a golden garland to tie to the deity's head. Kālananda, who had great courage, wished to go and snatch the golden garland. Wishing to approach, the deity scared him, and the monk's hair stood on end. But because he was unafraid, he defeated the deity, snatched the golden garland, and carried it off. Later he had some doubts: "Will I not incur a *pārājika*?" He informed the Buddha of the case, who said:
>
> "You have not incurred a *pārājika*, rather a *sthūlātyaya*".[71]

Deities were thus regarded by their devotees as having wish-granting and tutelary powers, and their worship of them, it seems, derived from the emotion of fear. Some monks, in utter rejection of these beliefs and in overcoming the fear associated with such images, would thus actively steal items from deities in acts of dominance. Their committing theft, however, did not result in a *pārājika* (usually punishable with expulsion from the monastic community) but in the lighter infraction of a *sthūlātyaya*; perhaps because the

forced disrobing of a monk for simply applying their own semiotic logic to a competing cult would have been regarded as too severe a punishment. The enactment of this ideology hence proved a provocative means to upend the aesthetics of fear maintained by deity cults and presumably offer a direct challenge their institutional power.

In the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinayavibhaṅga* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶, the fear associated with such imagery also led to a general ban on monks and nuns from making various images, including kings, deities, and *yakṣas*, to scare others.[72] But along with a ban on creation, there was also an injunction against the worship or indeed destruction of images, which, again, monks would do on the assumption that images of deities were purely representational. Thus, in another passage from the *Nidāna* section of the *Uttaragrantha* in the same legal code:

> At one time, the Fortunate One was in the Kingdom of Magadha, where there was a Great Minister and Brahmin named Varṣākāra, to whom he taught the essentials of the Dharma in brief, saying in verse:
>
> "If one has correct faith,
>
> And makes offerings to the pantheons of deities,
>
> One is in accord with the Great Teacher's teaching,
>
> And is praised by the Buddhas".
>
> At that time, the group of six monks made offerings to Kaṭapūtana[73], Mātaṅga[74], and Kālikā[75,76] whereupon the Brahmins and householders said to each other: "Noble Ones, [you] have already expounded renunciation according to the *vinaya*, why do you contrarily allow deities to be worshipped?" The monks informed the Buddha of this matter, who said:
>
> "What I teach the laity is subtle in meaning and is not to be performed by you, monks. Therefore, you shouldn't worship deities".
>
> At one time, the monks were in a temple of the deities and disregarded them; the deities said: "What fault did we commit to be offended by you so?" At that time, the monks took the matter to the Buddha who said:
>
> "Henceforth, you should neither make offerings to the deities nor offend them".
>
> At one time there were monks who were later in another region where they saw images of Kaṭapūtana, Mātaṅga, and Kālikā and thereupon struck and broke them. At that time, the householders said as follows:
>
> "These images of deities lack consciousness, why then, venerable ones, would you destroy them?" The monks then took the case to the Buddha, who said:
>
> "Monks, you should not destroy images of the deities!"[77]

The worship of deities is presented here as the exclusive preserve of the laity, being performatively contrary to the figure of the renunciate who sees nothing to be derived from their propitiation, nor indeed any threat from their derogation. Such a stark rejection of deities' power was thus even more severe when applied to their representations, resulting, in the above case, in iconoclasm. Here, however, the ideological premises which provided monks with the justification to steal from images of deities are contrarily used to criticise monks for destroying the same. Because if indeed, as a monk of the Indic North and Northwest in the early Common Era would likely contend, these images lacked any semblance of sentience, then there would be little service in iconoclasm if actual and not merely symbolic destruction was the goal.

5. Conclusions: A Brief Word on 'Aesthetic Shock' (*Saṃvega*)

The responses of monasticism to the aesthetics of pleasure and fear in art examined here are of decisive historical import, marking the very moment in which monastics were forced to confront such phenomena and to develop an ideology with which to guide their law and praxis. Significantly, it led certain monastic groups of the Indic North and North-

west around the turn of the Common Era to redact their legal codes and so codify through discrete legal responses how monasticism would relate to art in its various permutations. It is therefore worth reflecting a little further, in these final words, on what unites these responses, for despite treating of quite different objects in kind, they are in fact quite akin in their ideology, insofar as they derive from the same irresolvability as regards aesthetics and similarly seek to achieve resolution via the same semiotic premises.

Decorative and figural art had long been a ubiquitous aspect of Indic society, and monasticism therefore had a choice to adopt, adapt to, or reject its presence. Governed by certain doctrinal premises, which sought to simultaneously enclose aesthesis and unclose semiosis in phenomenal experience, monastics' view of art oftentimes contradicted widespread cultural assumptions, according to which such aesthetic objects were the embodiments of affective power. When the decision had been made to introduce art to the monastery around the turn of the Common Era, it thus led to certain unwanted effects. It would at first sight seem an ideological impossibility that the very same aesthetics of worldly pleasures, associated foremost with the art of picture galleries, was redeployed in monastic architecture and fashion given that it contradicted the aesthetics of asceticism they themselves strove to perform in representing their own ideal. And following the discourses of *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, it is indeed precisely this kind of debate monastics underwent at this time. Yet the opportunities of aesthetic draw for patronage ultimately ensured the adoption of art, albeit with a restriction on its more erotic modes. Likewise, the Buddhists attempts at ideological hierarchization over competing cults, which resulted in the negation of the aesthetics of fear and the ontologies of images of deities as mere symbols in the *Sarvāstivādavinaya* and *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, ran the two-fold risk of translating into confrontational acts of theft and iconoclasm as well as disputing the very validity of stūpas and Buddha-images and the modes of ritual practice related to them. In both cases, there was an issue of how monasticism was to be represented through and in relation to art, and in the legal discourses we considered, the paradoxes entailed in applying their ideology were left fundamentally unresolved.

Clarification, of a sort, to the issues posed in coordinating the relation between monasticism and art can nonetheless be sought in a specific mode of experience termed *saṃvega*: a peculiar, soteriologically directed and meta-emotional response toward aesthetic phenomena which compels an individual to renounce the world, manifesting as "cognitive dissonance" (Brekke 2002, pp. 61–63), a "disgust" for worldly suffering and "desire for emancipation" (Acri 2015, pp. 199–200), or, more etymologically, an "anxious thrill" (Scheible 2016) or "aesthetic shock", as proposed by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, whose elucidation of the semiotic quality of this "disinterested aesthetic" (or 'unaesthetic aesthetic' perhaps) is regrettably not always given its deserved attention; he writes:

> [. . .] *saṃvega* is a state of shock, agitation, fear, awe, wonder or delight induced by some physically or mentally poignant experience. It is a state of feeling, but always more than a merely physical reaction. The "shock" is essentially one of the realization of the implications of what are strictly speaking only the aesthetic surfaces of phenomena that may be liked or disliked as such. [. . .] more than a mere physical shock is involved; the blow has a *meaning* for us, and the realization of that meaning, in which nothing of the physical sensation survives, is still a part of the shock. [. . .] In either phase, the external signs of the experience may be emotional, but while the signs may be alike, the conditions they express are unalike. In the first phase, there is really a disturbance, in the second there is the experience of a peace that cannot be described as an emotion in the sense that fear and love or hate are emotions. It is for this reason that Indian rhetoricians have always hesitated to reckon "Peace" (*śānti*) as a "flavour" (*rasa*) in one category with the other flavours". (Coomaraswamy 1943, pp. 176–78)

Saṃvega—as the ideologically governed semiotic apperception of aesthetic objects—is thus associated with an array of experiences, both repellent and attractive, all of which can be viewed didactically as having a common meaning. In Buddhist literature, it is foremost

associated with the experience of repellent phenomena. To return to the *Buddhacarita*—a work which itself seeks to constitute both aesthetic and didactic modes[78]—we find it exemplified in Prince Siddhartha's first exposure to the city beyond the palace's walls and his encounter with sickness, old age and death, in response to which he is shocked by the unpleasurable realities of existence, like a cow when near the sound of great bolt of lightning (*mahāśaner ghoṣam ivāntike gauḥ*).[79] As the simile implies, this function of *saṃvega* entails an element of fear, an emotion which is itself paradoxically presented in Buddhist sources as being negated in certain contexts when considered a hindrance to Buddhism's purpose, as in the confrontation with deity cults, but also as being affirmed in others as a "means of religious achievement"—for the experience of *saṃvega* above all marks that startling moment of conversion which causes one to feel dispassion for and so renounce the world (Brekke 1999, pp. 450–59). But the same logic is applied to attractive phenomena too. In a mirror episode from the *Ayogṛhajātaka* of Āryaśura's *Jātakamālā* (c. 4th century CE), the Bodhisattva, as a prince in a former life, first leaves the palace on the day of a quadrimestral festival and immerses himself in the city's beauty (*śobhā*). Yet, atop his ornamented chariot and amidst the colourful crowd of the festive procession he could only think of the transience of the events occurring before him, seeing in salubrity, youth, and life only sickness, old-age and death. As the opening aphorism to the narrative reads: 'Even the beauty of royalty does not obstruct the highest path for those whose minds are shaken; one should thus make this shock familiar' (*rājalakṣmīr api śreyomārgaṃ nāvṛṇoti saṃvignamānasānām iti saṃvegaparicayaḥ kāryaḥ*)[80]. In addition to constituting that initial experience of dissonance which leads one to adopt an ascetic view of the world, aesthetic shock is therefore also to be learned and repeated; an ideological mimesis which decodes aesthesis and encodes semiosis in phenomenal experience.

It is for this reason that the same mode is applied to visiting Buddhism's four sacred sites (*caitya*), marking the Buddha's birth, awakening, turning of the wheel of Dharma, and *parinirvāṇa* (Coomaraswamy 1943, p. 177), as well as to Buddha-images. For in doubly indexing the Buddha's presence and absence via art, these potentially aesthetic objects in fact constitute representations of Buddhism's doctrinal lynchpin, the experience of the true significance of which gives rise to *saṃvega*, consequent faith (*śraddhā*) in Buddhist ideology, and the apathetic experience of serenity (*prasāda*), which itself, again somewhat paradoxically, results in the compulsion to make a dispassionate donation of a like material object (Rotman 2003). Indeed, the compulsive aspect of this mode is highlighted by Kumāralāta in his gloss to the story from the **Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā Dṛṣṭāntapaṅkti* considered above, wherein he writes that the Arhat Upagupta, despite being 'free from the bonds of desire' (斷欲結使; Skt. *anunayasaṃyojana*)—a prerequisite for the experience of *saṃvega*[81]—and knowing the solely symbolic nature of the Buddha-image, 'reflexively' (不覺, lit. 'unconsciously')[82] falls before its feet in adoration, like a tree whose roots have been cut (如斷根樹, Skt. *mūlanikṛtta iva drūmaḥ*).[83]

A logic of this kind, in which the immediate experience of an aesthetic object is supplanted by an ideologically mediated semiotic view, exemplifies precisely the sort of theoretical position monastics of the Indic North and Northwest sought to codify in their legal codes in resolving their uneasy relation with art. For whether evoking pleasure, fear or faith, art could be potentially shocking in equal measure when viewed as a sign: empty in and of itself but a powerful vehicle for the kind of meaning Buddhist ideology sought to inculcate.

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Notes

1 *avalambya gavākṣapārśvam anyā śayitā cāpavibhugnagātrayaṣṭiḥ,virarāja vilambicāruhārā racitā toraṇaśālabhañjikeva.* Bcar 5, 52 (Johnston 2007).

2 Little is known of Aśvaghoṣa's biography but tradition states he was born to a native of Sāketa (Ayodhyā) in the Indic North and associates him also with Gandhāra in the Northwest, during the reign of the Kuṣāṇa ruler, Kaniṣka I (c. 127–151 CE) (Salomon 2015, p. 507).

3 Carvings of the *śālabhañjikā* have been discovered at Buddhist, Jain, and other sites across South Asia and are likewise mentioned in an array of literary sources from the turn of the Common Era (Vogel 1929).

4 Having observed the women reclining in this way and that,
Awry, their postures a disarray,
Yet perfect in form and beautiful in speech,
The king's son became reprehensive:
"Impure and awry! In this world,
Such is the nature of women.
But led astray by clothes and decorations,
A man succumbs to passion for their femininity".
samaveksya tathā tathā śayānā vikṛtās tā yuvatīr adhīraceṣṭāḥ,
guṇavadvapuṣo 'pi valgubhāṣā nṛpasūnuḥ sa vigarhayāṃ babhūva.
aśucir vikṛtaś ca jīvaloke vanitānām ayam īdṛśaḥ svabhāvaḥ,
vasanābharaṇais tu vañcyamānaḥ puruṣaḥ strīviṣayeṣu rāgam eti. Bcar 5, 63–64.

5 Saund 18, pp. 63–64 (Johnston 1928).

6 (Kumar 2020, p. 148); currently held in the Lucknow Museum, Lucknow, India: Antiquity No. J-595 A.

7 I would like to thank Tanabe Tadashi for kindly sharing his photo with me and allowing me to reproduce it here; currently held in the SMB Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Aku Süd-, Südost- und Zentralasien, Berlin: Objektnummer I 54.

8 (Gombrich 2014, pp. 84–85): on 'restraint of the senses' (*indriyasaṃvara*) and avoidance of emotional reactions in Pali canonical sources. To cite but two examples: in the *Vinibandhasutta*, the attractice sensations of passion (*rāga*), desire (*chanda*), affection (*pema*), thirst (*pipāsa*), burning (*pariḷāha*) and craving (*taṇhā*) towards sensual pleasures (*kāma*), the body (*kāya*) and form (*rūpa*) are named as 'emotional bondages' (*cetasovinibandha*) and obstacles for the renunicate, AN 5. 18 (Hardy 1900); in the *Abhayasutta*, such emotions are elsewhere presented as causes of the repellent sensations of fear (*bhaya*), AN 2. 173–174 (Morris 1888), and grief (*soka*) in the *Piyavagga* of the *Dhammapada*, Dhp 212–216 (von Hinüber and Norman 1995). (For a discussion of the latter passage and the emotion of fear in early Buddhist sources, see Brekke 1999).

9 The modern notion of 'aesthetics', particularly when used in the narrow sense of making judgements of taste about 'art' (see fn. 11) or in relation to abstract notions of beauty, was not overtly theorised in Indic thought. In early Buddhist literature, for instance, beauty is specifically related to feminity, erotic pleasures or physical ornamentation alone (Gombrich 2014, pp. 86–97). It is only from around the 4th century CE, within treatises on drama (*nātya*), that aesthetics comes to be formalised with the principle of 'taste' (*rasa*), the emotions one experiences before an aesthetic object: "What Indian thinkers wanted to figure out above all was what exactly distinguishes an aesthetic from a nonaesthetic object or event, and how that distinction plays out in audience response" (Pollock 2016, p. 3). This line of thinking, however, is quite characteristic of Buddhist legal discourse to treat art and there is hence argument to be made that a concern with aesthetics can be traced much earlier, for which evidence shall be supplied in the cases of pleasure and fear considered below.

10 Archaeological evidence from across South Asia suggests that monasteries were constructed no earlier than the 1st century BCE (Fogelin 2015, p. 104ff).

11 'Art' (like 'aesthetics', see fn. 9)—in the fullest sense today's usage, which acknowledges art for its own sake and as the aesthetic poesis of the artist—finds no direct translation in Indic thought and language. Certain arts (*śilpa*), like drama (*nātya*), painting (*citra*), poetry (*kāvya*) and so on, were indeed defined in standardised listings (Monier-Williams 2008, s.v. *śilpa*) but the productions to derive from these respective domains are rarely spoken of in terms of the aesthetic creativity of artists, who are largely nameless in South Asian history and to that degree are better termed artisans. License for its application here can nonetheless be sought in the objective distance entailed in the hermeneutical usage of the notion when applied to fabricated and aesthetic objects. In European thought, the notion of art emerged out of the Protestant Revolution, whose ideology negated the power of images idolised by the papists as mere signs and thus rejected their cultic whilst affirming their aesthetic and didactic value. As Hans Belting writes: "Art becomes the sphere of the artist, who assumes control of the image as proof of his or her art. The crisis of the old image and the emergence of the new concept of art are interdependent. Aesthetic mediation allows a different

use of images, about which artist and beholder can agree between themselves. Subjects seize power over the image and seek through art to apply their metaphoric concept of the world. The image, henceforth produced according to the rules of art and deciphered in terms of them, presents itself to the beholder as an object of reflection. Form and content renounce their unmediated meaning in favor of the mediated meaning of aesthetic experience and concealed argumentation" (Belting 1994, p. 16). Certain streams of Buddhist discourse around the turn of the Common Era made use of a similar strategy in their confrontation with such objects. Although art was not considered the sphere of the artist purposed towards aesthetic appreciation alone, several forms of decorative and figural art were identified by monastics for the types of aesthetic and ontological assumptions they were understood to normatively convey. These were then axiomatically abandoned, from the perspective of Buddhist ideology, as unwanted aesthetic immediacies by way of a particular semiotic which rendered such object signs, as will be explicated below.

12 *yathā citrakaro rūpaṃ yakṣasyātibhayaṅkaram,bibheti svayam ālikhya saṃsāre 'py abudhas tathā.* M-Vimś 16 (Tucci 1956). The *Mahāyānavimśikā* is attributed to Nāgārjuna, who was likely active in South India in the early Common Era (Ye 2019, pp. 335–40). However, the text's attribution to this figure is regarded as spurious and the present verse is likely earlier because the source of this simile of the painted *yakṣa*, common to Mahāyāna discourse, is encountered in an early text of that tradition, the *Kāśyapaparivarta*, albeit in portions only extant in Chinese and Tibetan witnesses (Martini 2008, p. 93).

13 In fact, the Buddhists developed a theory which aimed at commensuration of the three purposes through a peculiar mode of meta-emotional cognition, termed *saṃvega*, or "aesthetic shock", to follow the translation of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (Coomaraswamy 1943), whose observations on its role in the confrontation with art remain the most keen and will be considered below in some concluding remarks. But the value of his study, though often cited, has not always been properly recognised. Indeed, it was entirely ignored by Richard Gombrich, who, informed by a decidedly narrow view of aesthetics as being related to beauty and pleasure alone, concluded that there is no room in Buddhist thought for such a theory, notwithstanding a certain perception of art in Buddhist sources which he found to be wholly negative. Art for Buddhism, he suggests, is solely a concern with the cultic or the didactic, meaning it must function to generate devotion or convey a message (Gombrich 2014). In his study of monastic legal codes, Erich Zürcher arrived at similar conclusions, arguing that aesthetic concerns are "minimal" and that the focus, rather, is on the devotive, meditative, and tutelary functions (Zürcher 2013, pp. 478–85). However, Gregory Schopen has contrastingly revealed how the aesthetics of pleasure in Mūlasarvāstivādin legal discourse was consciously adopted and utilised through the beauty of the art and environs of monasteries to generate patronage, a matter to which we shall later turn (Schopen 2006, 2007).

14 (Clarke 2015): for historical details of the extant legal codes.

15 (Schopen 2007, pp. 288–99): for a representative example of this thesis regarding the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* with specific bearing on the present question of art, for which confirmatory evidence for epigraphic donative formulae in the **Sarvāstivādavinaya* 十誦律 has also been identified (Albery 2020a, pp. 489–95).

16 The exception which lacks any such evidence of having undergone redaction is the **Bhikṣuprātimokṣasūtra* 解脫戒經 of the Kāśyapīyas (T 1460), which (as is indeed the case with most *Prātimokṣasūtras*) does not contain any references to art.

17 These data will not be presented here as I intend to publish a list of translated passages concerning art from monastic legal codes in the near future.

18 The etymology of this term and its several variants are unclear; it denotes an offence whose transgression requires expiation (Heirman 2002a, vol. 47, pp. 141–47).

19 Pāt 26 (von Simson 2000, p. 210; Pachow 2007, p. 124).

20 In the *Vibhaṅga* of each legal code, the story is basically the same: a nun asks the monk Udāyin to sew her robe, which he does whilst taking the liberty of rendering an image upon it, for which she is criticised by the laity. The *Theravādavinaya* does not specify the nature of the 'image' or 'illumination' (*paṭibhānacitta*), see Vin 4, 60–62. But the **Sarvāstivādavinaya* (T1435, p. 84b22–c23), **Mahiśāsakavinaya* (T 1421, pp. 47c11–48a16), **Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T 1428, p. 651a19–c13), and *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* (T 1425, p. 349c12–25) name it as an image of a man and woman copulating.

21 Pāc 41 (Pruitt 2001, pp. 176–77). In the legal codes of other Sthavira monastic groups the wording is basically the same, cp. T 1437, p. 485a3 (Pāt 99); T 1423, 211a16–17 (Pāt 99); T 1431, p. 1037a18–19 (Pāt 100); cf. the *Mahāsāṃghikabhikṣuṇīprātimokṣasūtra* 摩訶僧祇比丘尼戒本, T 1427, p. 563a1 (Pāc 119); Pāc 120 (Roth 1970, p. 268).

22 Vin 4, 298.

23 T 1428, p. 748b11–16; T 1421, p. 90a11–15; Vin (Mā-L) 233 (Roth 1970, p. 268).

24 T 1435, p. 323b26–c1.

25 Regarding paintings in monasteries, the *Theravādavinaya* simply states: 'One should not, monks, make an image in the form of a woman and in the form of a man.' *Na bhikkhave paṭibhānacittaṃ kārāpetabbaṃ itthirūpakaṃ purisarūpakaṃ.* Vin 2, 151–152. Implied in this rule is a prohibition against sexual imagery, in which respect other legal codes are more explicit. Thus, in the **Sarvāstivādavinaya*, sexual imagery is banned from seats (T 1435, p. 277c4–7), rugs (T 1435, p. 468b15–17) and beds (T 1435, p. 405a26–28), and is listed as one of five demeritorious gifts (T 1435, p. 363b22–24; T1441, p. 609a12–13). Likewise, in the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, Nanda is criticised for painting an image of his wife Sundarī atop a rock (T 1451, p. 252a15–27), as are the group of six (*ṣaḍvārgika*) monks for carving a man and a woman on seals (T 1451, p. 209a27) or on lifebuoys used to cross rivers (T 1447, p. 1055b6–16). In the **Mahīśāsakavinaya*, nuns are forbidden from making portraits, lest they become attached

to their visage (T1421, p. 99b3–10), and monks are banned from carving images of men and women and birds and beasts as gifts for the laity (T 1421, p. 176c18–21). The **Dharmaguptakavinaya* similarly bans sexual imagery from monastic halls (T 1428, p. 943a13–17). Chronologically later passages from the **Sarvāstivādavinaya* (T 1435, pp. 351c11–352a6) and *Mahāsāmghikavinaya* (T 1425, pp. 496c24–497a2) also ban such art from stūpas.

26 Many rules make clear that it was the pornographic element to have caused the most issues. Thus, in several legal codes one finds precedents in which a monk has sex with or masturbates over sexual images, see T 1421, p. 182a17–19; T 1464, p. 860c18–29; T 1441, p. 584a1–5; T 1428, p. 975a3–5.

27 Monastic figures other than fully ordained nuns commit the lighter infraction of a *duṣkṛta* in going to picture galleries, cp. T 1428, p. 48c4–5; T 1421, p. 90a19–20; T 1425, p. 539c11–12; Vin (Mā-L) 233.

28 畫堂: Lit. 'hall of paintings'; Skt. *citragṛha*, p. *cittāgāra*.

29 摸法: Lit. 'method of imitation', or perhaps 'style' (Heirman 2002b, p. 708). 摸 is here a phonetic loan of 模 or 摹 ('to imitate, model') encountered in other sources. For instance, in the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣa* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論 (c. 2nd–4th century CE, trans. 656–659 CE), this method of imitation in the art of painting or carving is used as part of a metaphor for the art of teaching the Dharma, with the structural model of the painted or carved object (theory of teaching) being established before the details (method of teaching) are filled in (T 1545. 237a21–26). Another two occurrences arise in the *Damamūkanidānasūtra* 賢愚經 (trans. 445 CE): one concerns the Buddha Pusya using the method of imitation to render a self-portrait in order that the master painters are able to thereafter image his otherwise unimaginable image (T 202. 369a7–12); the second concerns the method of constructing a monastery (T 202, p. 419b21–22).

30 若復為僧事塔事而往觀看畫堂欲取摸法，不犯。T 1428, p. 748c7–9.

31 Vin 2, 117–154.

32 On door frames, images of *nāgas* and cavalry are banned but grapevines, lotuses and the five colours are allowed. T 1428, p. 941a4–10.

33 In a section allowing the creation of Buddha-images (a rule, therefore, which cannot be dated much earlier than the 1st century CE), these other images are permitted if sufficient plaster is left over. T 1428, p. 957a4–19.

34 T 1428, p. 831b17-c1.

35 T 1428, p. 937c18–26. But in other cases, these and additional images are also proscribed for certain items, such as door frames and bowls, indicating that imagery was contextually determined by a given object. T 1428, pp. 937c26–938a4.

36 Leaving us with no mistake as to what is at stake, the passage further justifies these forms of art through the analogical precedent of a past life story (*pūrvayoga*) of King Kṛkin, who in a bygone age had such art rendered when constructing a monastery for Buddha Kāśyapa. T 1425, pp. 496c24–497a2.

37 In one more patent instance, it is considered acceptable that seal rings (*mudrā*) belonging to a master of donations (*dānapati*) are engraved with a Dharma-wheel abutted on each side by deer and the donor's name below; but for monks a carved skeleton or skull is prescribed in order that a monk may cultivate disgust (*aśubhabhāvanā*). T 1451, p. 209a17–b7.

38 Notably in the *Bhikṣuṇīvinaya* of the Mahāsāmghikalokottaravādins, grape forests (*drākṣāvanā*) are listed together with picture galleries as one of the sites from which nuns are banned. BhīVin(Mā-L) 268.

39 See T 1435, p. 192c9–19; T 1448, p. 39b19-c26. In the latter, the Buddha also explains to the monks, who had never seen a grape (葡萄, Skt. *drākṣā*), that the fruit comes from a 'northern region', namely Kāśmīra 迦濕彌羅. This geographical connection is strengthened by two renderings on reliefs from Bharhut and Sāñcī of figures in "Greek" attire (i.e., from the Indic Northwest) bearing grapes (Tanabe 2022, pp. 403–6).

40 (Falk 2009; Filigenzi 2019; Tanabe 2022): for comprehensive analyses of all evidence.

41 Coping with the aesthetics of pleasure in erotic imagery was sometimes simply a matter of correct framing. For instance, the prohibition of sexual imagery is given implicit exemption in *Mūlasarvāstivādavinayavibhaṅga* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶 when intended for didactive purposes. Thus, in painting the wheel of existence (*bhavacakra*) at the entrance to the monastery in order that a monastic teacher may introduce visitors to Buddhist doctrine, it is said one should paint on the felloe a representation of the twelve links of dependent origination, of which the condition of contact (*sparśa*) should be rendered as the image of a man and women touching one another, and the condition of craving (*tṛṣṇā*) as a woman embracing a man. Here, then, the aesthetic of erotic imagery, for which such art was uniformly banned under monastic law, is supplanted by the semiotic value in representing doctrinal views. For a full description of the painting, see T 1442, p. 811a24-c6 (Teiser 2006, 53ff).

42 E.g., T 1440, p. 519c23–27.

43 The precise etymology and sense of this term remains problematic; violation of the rule requires legal procedures which could eventuate in a monk or nun being temporarily excluded from the activities of the monastic community (Heirman 2002a, vol. 47, pp. 128–38).

44 PrMoSū(Mā) SA 2 (Pachow and Mishra 1956; Pachow 2007, p. 76).

45 T 1425, p. 264b10–c28.

46 PrMoSū(Mā) SA 3 (Pachow 2007, p. 77).

47 T 1425, pp. 267c19–268b13.

48 Lit. 'fall involving forfeiture', a rule whose transgression requires that the offender forfeit an item they illegally acquired (Heirman 2002a, vol. 47, pp. 138–41).

49 PrMoSū(Mā) NP 6 (Pachow 2007, pp. 94–95).

50 T 1425, pp. 301c03–302a18.

51 PrMoSū(Mā) Pāc 84 (Pachow 2007, p. 155).

52 PrMoSū(Mā) Pāc 85 (Pachow 2007, p. 155).

53 See T 1425, p. 391b18–c7 and T 1425, p. 392a8–29 respectively.

54 王子！看是柱梁榱棟、櫨槉枅衡、彫文刻鏤、種種彩畫。」次至己房，見青色地敷好坐床，敷兜羅紵褥，兩頭安枕，以白氎覆上。見已即問：「是誰所有？」答言：「我許。」王子言：「此大嚴麗，非尊者所宜。」答言：「若非我所宜，誰復應畜？」王子答言：「王、王子、大臣所應服飾。」復言：「我非王子耶？世尊若不出家，應作轉輪聖王，王四天下，汝等一切是我人民。然世尊不樂是處，出家成佛作法輪王，我是法輪王子，服飾設復過此，猶尚是宜，況此麁物。」王子聞已，慚愧無言。 T 1425, p. 392a12–29.

55 若言：「世尊已除貪欲瞋恚愚癡，用是塔為【。。。】但自莊嚴而受樂【。。。】用是華果園為【。。。】用是精舍供養為【。。。】用是幡蓋供養爲【。。。】用此伎樂供養爲？」得越比尼罪，業報重。 T 1425, p. 498a6–b25. Mine is a slight modification of another full translation (Karashima 2018, pp. 442–47).

56 When this reendowment of agency occurred is not entirely clear. Monks writing in the 5th century CE speak of images behaving independently of their subject, as is reported in the travelogue of Faxian 法顯 when visiting the Northwest (DeCaroli 2015, pp. 153–55), or of being endowed with power through ritual consecration, as recounted by Buddhaghosa, whereby the image is brought to life by installing relics within it and by painting its eyes (Gombrich 1966, p. 25). This chronology does however correspond to what is observed in Brāhmī inscriptions of the 5th–6th century and what Schopen argues are coeval passages of *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*, in which Buddhas are said to be actually present in the monastery and in Buddha images and to be in receipt of donations as "legal entities"; archaeological remains of stupas from the 9th–10th centuries also reveal that images were interred as if "actual persons" (Schopen 1990).

57 Aś-av 23–27, (Mukhopadhyaya 1963; Strong 1983, pp. 191–96). For the Chinese translation, see T 2042, pp. 119–20.

58 T 1545, pp. 697c18–698a22.

59 T 201, pp. 307b29–309b26.

60 色像: In other texts, Kumārajīva uses this term to translate Skt. *rūpa* (e.g., in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*, T 475, p. 547a4–5) which is itself a term of some semantic scope, encompassing all manner of 'outward appearance', such as 'form', 'shape', 'figure', and thus by extension a 'mark' or 'likeness', 'image', 'representation' and so forth (Monier-Williams 2008, s.v. *rūpa*). To my mind it should be understood here more in the sense of the latter connotation.

61 形: Again in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*, Kumārajīva uses this term to translate a variety of related Skt. terms denoting outward appearances, including *nidarśana* (T 475, p. 544c11–12) and *rūpa* (T 475, p. 552b23–24). It is therefore rather troublesome to identify the distinct Skt. terms underlying 形 here and 色像 above, and the translations given here remain tentative.

62 爾時魔王言：「汝五體投地為我作禮，云何說言我不敬汝。」尊者語魔言：「我不敬禮汝亦不違言誓，喻如以塗木造作佛像，世間人天皆共禮敬。爾時不敬於塗木，欲敬禮佛故，我禮佛色像，不為禮魔形。」 T 201, p. 309b17–22.

63 Aś-av 26; in one Chinese version it is both images of the deities and the Buddha, T 2042, p. 120a19–20 (Soper 1950, p. 150).

64 The *Aśokarājāvadāna* 阿育王傳 highlights the representational nature of the image by likening Māra's transformation to using colourful paint on fresh white cotton cloth to render the features of the Buddha's body (如以彩色畫新白氎作佛身相), T 2042, p. 119c20–21.

65 Notably, Richard Gomnrich reports the same type of logic among the Buddhists in Sri Lanka, who, with apparent inconsistency, treat the Buddha image as if it were alive whilst affirming that such ritual actions are enacted out of memory for the Buddha or his teachings (Gombrich 1966, p. 23).

66 During this period, Buddha images and relics had become commodities and were liable to trade and theft. In the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinayavibhaṅga*, for instance, stealing a Buddha-image with relics—the actual embodied presence of the Buddha—was regarded as worse than stealing an image without, indicating the relative worthlessness of the image. T 1442, p. 847a2–3 (Albery 2020b).

67 The original sense of this term remains obscure but it is the more severe of the offences, resulting in the immediate loss of a perpetrator's monastic status and potential expulsion from the monastery (Heirman 2002a, vol. 47, pp. 119–27).

68 SV Pāt 2 (Pachow 2007, pp. 72–73).

69 Violation of a *sthūlātyaya* is less grave than a *pārājika*, requiring the offender expiate his or her offense before the entire monastic community (Durt 1979).

70 諸比丘取天祠中衣毳、劫貝、白氎，守祠人言：「大德！此諸衣物屬祠莫取。」比丘言：「此泥木天用衣物為？」守祠人言：「佛、阿羅漢塔物我亦當取。」是事白佛，佛言：「從今日天祠中衣毳、劫貝、白氎不得取。若取得偷蘭遮罪。」 T 1435, p. 463a2–6.

71 舍衛國有一天神像，能與人願。有一居士從求所願，得隨意願歡喜故，以白氈裹天像身。是中有比丘名黑阿難，有大力不畏神像，奪神氈持去。後生疑：「我將無得波羅夷耶？」是事白佛，佛言：「不得波羅夷，得偷蘭遮。」有天神像能護人身，有一居士從求所願，得隨意願。是居士歡喜故，以金鬘繫頭上，黑阿難大勇健，欲往奪金鬘。欲到, 神便怖之，是比丘心驚毛竪，猶故不畏，降伏此神, 奪金鬘持去。後生疑：「我將無得波羅夷耶？」是事白佛，佛言：「不得波羅夷，得偷蘭遮。」 T 1435, pp. 430c22–431a3.

72 T 1442, pp. 850c07–851a16; T 1443, pp. 990c10–991a7. These form part of the rule which prohibits monks and nuns from frightening others, see MSV Pāt 66 (Banerjee 1954; Pachow 2007, p. 143).

73 羯吒布呾那 (EMC. k ɨattra ɨ^{h}p$_{ɔ}$^{h}tana', cp. 迦吒富單那: EMC. k ɨatra ɨ^{h}puw^{h}tanna'): Skt. *kaṭapūtana* refers to a group of spirits (*preta*), otherwise rendered in Chinese as 'bad smelling spirits' (奇臭鬼). (All reconstructions of Early Middle Chinese (7th century CE) phonetics, corresponding to the period of Yijing's (d. 713 CE) translation of the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* (trans. 703 CE), are based on Pulleyblank (1991)).

74 摩登伽 (EMC. matəŋ ɡa): Skt. *mātaṅga* is the name given to various spirits, including a certain king of the *nāgas* (Mvy 3262, (Minaev 1992), or, in later Jain literature and art dating from the 6th century, a *yakṣa* and *śāsanadevatā* who accompanies Mahāvīra (Owen 2012, pp. 84–85).

75 瞿利迦 (EMC. guə̀li^{h}k ɨa): Skt. *kālikā* (*kālakā*) literally denotes the 'black one', an appellation given to various bad spirits, see (Monier-Williams 2008, s.v. kālaka).

76 I have not been able to identify this specific triad of fearful deities in Indic sources. The first occurs with fair frequency as the final member of a list of deities and spirits in (Mūla-)Sarvāstivādin sources; e.g., BhīKaVā 26a1–b1 (Schmidt 1993); Divy 105 (Cowell and Neil 1886) (Cf. Bechert 2003, s.v. *kaṭapūtana*). One abbreviated list of fearful deities and spirits in Jñānagupta's 闍那崛多 (d. 600–605) translation of the *Buddhacaritasamgrāha* 佛本行集經 begins with *kaṭapūtana* 迦吒富單那 and ends with *kālikā*, translated in this case as 'Black Spirit' (黑闇鬼), T 190, p. 845a29–b4.

77 爾時世尊為摩揭陀國大臣婆羅門名曰行雨略宣法要，說伽他曰：
「若正信丈夫，供養諸天眾，
能順大師教，諸佛所稱揚。」
時 六眾苾芻即便供養羯吒布呾那, 摩登伽, 瞿利迦天。時婆羅門及諸居士咸作是言：「聖者！既於善說法律之中而為出家，寧容反更 敬事天神。」時諸苾芻以緣白佛，佛言：「我為俗人密意而說，非是汝等苾芻所為。是故汝等，於諸天神勿為敬事。」時有苾芻 於天神處便生輕賤, 彼天神曰：「我等於仁有何過失而見欺倰？」時諸苾芻以緣白佛，佛言：「汝等從今於天神處，不應供養亦勿欺倰。」時有苾芻，後於餘處見羯吒布呾那，及摩登伽, 瞿利伽像即便打破。時諸居士作如是言：「此天神像無有心識，聖者何故輒毀破耶？」時諸苾芻以緣白佛，佛言：「汝等苾芻！於天神像不應毀壞。 T 1452, p. 425b5–25.

78 (Regan 2022): on Asvaghoṣa's deployment of both didactics and the aesthetics of pleasure in his poetry as a means for the reader to attain peace. Similar arguments have also been made in the case of the 5th century *Mahāvaṃsa*, which itself claims to induce *saṃvega* and to lead to *pasāda* (Scheible 2016).

79 Bcar 3, 34–6. See also Bcar 4, 54–60.

80 Jm 32 (Vaidya 1959).

81 It is of note that the bonds of desire (*anunayasamyojana*) are elsewhere regarded as obstructions to *saṃvega*, which, as we saw above, precedes the arising of faith, see Mv-bh 2.1 (Nagao 1964).

82 In his gloss to the narrative, Kumāralāta explains the import of the story as being designed to garner patronage from the laity and to convince monastics of devotional practice, stating: 'If one wishes to praise the Buddha, one should tell [the story], for despite being free from the bonds of desire, one reflexively performs worship to him.' 若欲讚佛者，應當作是說，雖斷欲結使，不覺為作禮。T 201, p. 309b22–26. This notion of a 'reflex' is rather curious, and the Indic term underlying it eludes me. In principle it denotes some form of reactive feeling or compulsion of which even the most conscious are unconscious. It appears not to be some peculiar rendering of this text's translator, Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 (d. 413 CE) because Xuanzang 玄奘 (d. 664 CE) too opted to use it in his translation of the narrative's citation in the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣā*:

> When Venerable Upagupta saw this, he was pleased to have experienced the marvel and due to this pure thought, like a tree whose roots have been cut, was unable to hold himself up, and reflexively his body fell prostrate before Māra's feet.
> 時尊者鄔波毱多見已歡喜得未曾有。以淳淨意如斷根樹。莫能自持。不覺投身禮魔雙足。 T 1545, p. 698a18–20.

In Yijing's 義淨 (d. 713) translation of the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinayasaṃghabhedavastu* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶破僧事, the term arises thrice, in each case as a prelude to the arising of faith, see e.g., T 1450, p. 147c6–10.

83 From this episode in the *Aśokāvadāna* for example:

> Having forgotten his conception was due to the objective stimuli of the Fully Awakened One, he fixed his conception on the Buddha and like a tree whose roots have been cut fell with his entire body at the feet of Māra.
> *saṃbuddhālambanaiḥ saṃjñāṃ vismṛtya buddhasaṃjñām adhiṣṭhāya mūlanikṛtta iva drūmaḥ sarvaśarīreṇa mārasya pādayor nipatitaḥ.* Aś-av 26.

This is a problematic passage and has previously been rendered: "Then Upagupta, because of this affection for the Enlighted One, forgot his agreement [with Māra], and thinking that this image *was* the Buddha, he feel at Māra's feet with this

whole body, like a tree cut off at the root". (Strong 1983, p. 195). Or more preferably as, "Then, having forgotten that his conception occurred by focusing on the Perfectly Awakened One as an object", with his conception fixed on the Buddha, he fell prostrate at Māra's feet with his whole body, like a tree cut down at the roots.' (Rotman 2009, p. 170).

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