It is very difficult still to get an overview of Early North India—
dates, dynasties, denominations and deities there are still the sub-
jects of sometimes unedifying debate. We work, of course, with what
we have, and what we have are broken walls and tangled trenches,
stray inscriptions and reused pots, coins, images out of context, and
conclusions hanging by a thread. So much energy and erudition goes
into sorting all these things out that important questions go unasked.
We are usually so preoccupied with what is there that we often do
not ask—do not even wonder—why it is. When, for example, so
much of the raw data for North Indian numismatics comes from
Buddhist monastic sites and ritual deposits are we not obliged to ask
why this is so? How is it that groups of ascetic, celibate men who
were supposed to have renounced all wealth and social ties, left such
largess in the archeological record, how is it that they, and some-
times they alone, lived in North India in permanent, architecturally
sophisticated quarters, that they, and they alone, lived in intimate
association with what we call art? Something is clearly wrong with
this picture and there is a very good chance that we have not yet
understood the people in North India who handled the coins we
study or the pots we classify. As an example—and it is only that—
of an important group of such people, it is perhaps worthwhile to
try again to understand what exactly a Buddhist monk was in Early
North India. We can do this now a little better because we now
know a little better an important Buddhist monastic code that appears
to have been redacted there. That the Buddhist monk in Early North
India, and in this monastic code, did not look like the caricature
found in modern scholarly sources will come as no surprise to those
who know well what he left behind in his living quarters. The monk that we will see in this code is a construction-foreman, an art promoter, a banker, an entrepreneur, sometimes a shyster, and sometimes a saint—he should at least prove to be of some interest.

The monastic code in question, the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*, has been known in one form or another for a long time now,¹ and although it was very early on recognized that this code was compiled or redacted in Northwest India, the discussion of its date has been badly mis-directed by a very red herring and the inattention of those who were supposed to be following the trail. In 1958 the great Belgian scholar Étiennne Lamotte declared that this *Vinaya* or Code was late, that “...one cannot attribute to this work a date earlier than the 4th–5th Centuries of the Christian Era.”² This pronouncement—even at its inception based on very shaky grounds—still proved almost fatal since Lamotte himself was forced by his own further work to change his position—and he did so several times—but very few scholars seem to have noticed. By 1966 Lamotte was in fact referring to the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* as a source of information for the 1st or 2nd Century of our era.³

