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# Lineage and Transmission: Integrating the Chinese and Tibetan Orders of Buddhist Nuns

Heng-Ching Shih

Professor, Dept. of Philosophy, National Taiwan University

p. 503

## Summary

There are four-fold assembly of disciples in Buddhism: bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī, (fully ordained men and women) upāsaka and upāsikā (lay men and women). In Tibetan Buddhism the assembly of bhikṣuṇī is non-existent. As Tibetan Buddhism becomes more and more popular in the world, it faces more and more criticism of its non-existence of a bhikṣuṇī order, as it indicates more or less a sex discrimination.

Recently two seminars on the bhikṣuṇī ordination and the possible establishment of a Tibetan Bhikṣuṇī lineage were held in Taiwan and Dharamsala. In response to this movement, this paper deals with the issues concerning the bhikṣuṇī ordination in different vinaya traditions, the Chinese Bhikṣuṇī ordination and how a Tibetan Bhikṣuṇī lineage can be established. Specifically, the paper includes three parts.

The first part compares bhikṣuṇī ordination in different vinaya traditions, including Dharmagupta, Mūlasarvāstivāda, Theravāda, Mahāsāṅghika, etc.

The second part discusses as how the Chinese Bhikṣuṇī order was established, the procedures of the ordination and the validity of the Chinese Bhikṣuṇī lineage.

The last part deals with the issues concerning the establishment of a Tibetan Bhikṣuṇī order, including the difference of the prātimokṣa between Dharmagupta and Mūlasarvāstivāda, the single

p. 504

and dual ordinations, the possibility of the combination of two different vinaya lineages. Finally, the ways for the establishment of a Tibetan Bhikṣuṇī saṅgha are suggested.

**關鍵詞**：1.Bhikṣuṇī 2.Full Ordination 3.Tibetan Buddhism

4.Dharmagupta Vinaya 5.Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya 6.Buddhist Women

p. 505

Since the Chinese Communists unintentionally 'opened' Tibet's doors to the western world, Tibetan Buddhism has become more and more popular in the international community. As a result, the Tibetan tradition has attracted quite a few western women to join the Buddhist Saṅgha. In Buddhism there is a four-fold assembly of disciples, namely, upāsaka and upāsikā (layman and laywoman), bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī (fully ordained man and woman).

However, Tibetan Buddhism has never had a bhikṣuṇī saṅgha in its history. The lack of a bhikṣuṇī saṅgha in Tibet has led some Buddhist scholars to argue both that Tibet is not a “central” land of the Dharma and that Tibetan Buddhism harbors sexual discrimination.

In recent years, Tibetan Buddhism in the West has faced more and more pressure from its Western followers in general and Western nuns and female devotees in particular, to establish a bhikṣuṇī lineage. The Dalai Lama, who has been very open-minded concerning this issue, has assigned Tibetan monks familiar with vinaya to do research on various vinaya traditions and the bhikṣuṇī lineage in Chinese Buddhism in order to investigate the possibility of establishing a Tibetan Bhikṣuṇī lineage.

Recently two conferences were held specially to discuss the bhikṣuṇī lineage.<sup>[1]</sup> Vinaya masters from various Buddhist traditions gathered together to discuss the issues that the Tibetan tradition is

p. 506

most concerned with, namely, the validity and continuity of the Chinese Bhikṣuṇī lineage, the procedures of the bhikṣuṇī ordination, the difference between Dharmagupta and Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinayas, and the actual procedures to be followed if a Tibetan Bhikṣuṇī saṅgha is to be established, etc.

This paper, which tries to discuss these issues, includes four sections. Section one describes the early ordination tradition according to the textual record to determine what constitutes correct ordination for bhikṣuṇī. Section two examines the historical record in the Chinese tradition to show that a genuine bhikṣuṇī ordination was established in China and has been continuously maintained to the present. This finding is important since there have been recent claims to the contrary. Section three compares the Dharmagupta vinaya followed by the Chinese saṅgha and the Mūlasarvāstivādin vinaya followed by the Tibetan saṅgha and finds that the difference are not so great as to prevent members of the Tibetan nuns from receiving ordination from the Chinese saṅgha. Based on the discussion and findings in the first three sections, section four makes suggestions for the possible establishment of a Tibetan Bhikṣuṇī saṅgha.

## I. Procedures of Bhikṣuṇī Ordination

It is a well-known fact that the first Buddhist nun was Mahāprajāpatī, the aunt and stepmother of the Buddha.[2] It was

p. 507

recorded that one time when the Buddha was staying at Kapilavastu, Mahāprajāpatī together with five hundred Śākya women came to ask for the Buddha's permission to renounce the world and “go forth from home into homelessness in the dhamma and discipline proclaimed by the Truth-finder.”[3] They were refused three times by the Buddha. Finally, on behalf of the women, Ānanda asked the Buddha if a woman, having left the household and taken ordination, could realize the fruit of arhatship. The Buddha responded positively to the question, but he also made a condition that women follow the “eight chief rules” (gurudharmas) before allowing them to be ordained.

The eight chief rules vary slightly in different vinaya texts. According to the Dharmagupta Vinaya, the eight rules are:

- (1) A bhikṣuṇī, even if she has been ordained for one hundred years, should bow down before even a newly ordained bhikṣu.
- (2) A bhikṣuṇī is not to revile or abuse a bhikṣu.
- (3) A bhikṣuṇī should not admonish a bhikṣu whereas a bhikṣu can admonish a bhikṣuṇī.
- (4) A bhikṣuṇī should receive the upasaṃpadā ordination from both bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī saṅghas after two years of studying the precepts.
- (5) A bhikṣuṇī who has committed a serious offence should undergo the mānatta discipline[4] towards both bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī saṅghas.
- (6) Every half month the bhikṣuṇīs should ask the bhikṣu saṅgha to give exhortation.
- (7) A bhikṣuṇī should not spend the rainy season in a district where there is no bhikṣu.
- (8) After keeping the rainy season, the bhikṣuṇīs should hold the

p. 508

ceremony of repentance of their offences (pravāraṇā) before the bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī

saṅghas.[5]

The practice of these eight rules thus became a necessary condition for any woman wishing to become a Buddhist nun and guidelines of governing the relationship between the bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī saṅghas.[6] The fourth rule specifies that the upasaṃpadā (full bhikṣuṇī ordination) has to be confirmed by the bhikṣu saṅgha. Although it appears that the final authority of the full ordination lies on the bhikṣu saṅgha, the supervision of the whole process of a woman's ordination, beginning with the pravrajya ordination, leading to the śikṣamāṇika ordination (for two years' study of the six dharmas) and culminating in the upasaṃpadā ordination (except the final step), lies with the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha. In other words, the Buddha gave the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha the right and full responsibility to train its novices. The following are the steps and procedures in becoming a bhikṣuṇī.

Any woman who resolves to become a bhikṣuṇī needs to go through three ordinations, namely, śrāmaṇerikā, śikṣamāṇā and bhikṣuṇī (including two separated ordinations from the bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī saṅgha—this is usually called “dual ordination”).

p. 509

### **I. Śrāmaṇerikā ordination**

The first step in the ordination process for women is to ask permission to leave the household life and to request pravrajyā ordination from the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha. Before doing this, a lay woman (or layman) has to obtain the consent of both parents. One of the questions put at the pravrajyā and upasaṃpadā ceremonies of the candidate for ordination is “Have your parents given their consent?”[7] In the case of a married woman, she has to obtain the consent of her husband before she can be ordained.[8]

After the woman gets permission from her parents or husband, the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha is also required to give its permission. The Preceptor Bhikṣuṇī (karmakārikā), who asks for the permission from the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha, says, “May the Noble Saṅgha listen! The girl so-and-so desires to receive the pravrajyā ordination from the upādhyāyinī so-and-so. Now is the proper

time for the Saṅgha to grant so-and-so the pravrajyā ordination.”[9] This request ought to

p. 510

be repeated once more. After the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha gives its consent by remaining silent, the upādhyayinī master then shaves her head and confers the pravrajyā ordination.

After taking the pravrajyā ordination, the woman may take the ten precepts from her upādhyayinī and becomes a śrāmaṇerikā. According to the Dharmagupta Vinaya, a śrāmaṇerikā must: (1) be at least twelve years of age, or old enough to be able “to chase crows” ;[10] (2) keep the ten precepts of a śrāmaṇerikā; and (3) eat only one meal a day.[11]

## 2. Śikṣamāṇā ordination

A śrāmaṇerikā who is at least 18 years old may take the śikṣamāṇā ordination with her upādhyāyinī before the Bhikṣuṇī Saṅgha. She then lives as a śikṣamāṇā for a two-year period. There are two reasons for the requirement of two years of śikṣamāṇā training: (1) to ascertain that she is mature enough to become a bhikṣuṇī, and (2) to ensure that she is not pregnant.

According to the Dharmagupta Vinaya, the reason for the two-year training is that after joining the Saṅgha some young women did not know the precepts and therefore misbehaved. The Buddha therefore made the two-year training a requirement prior to the upasaṃpadā ordination.[12]

The Daśabhāṇavāra Vinaya (Shih-sung lu) gives another reason. At one time some bhikṣuṇīs unknowingly ordained a pregnant woman. Later, when they found out about her pregnancy, they accused her of sexual misconduct and wanted to expel her from the Saṅgha. She defended herself by explaining that she was pregnant

p. 511

before she became ordained. The bhikṣuṇīs reported this to the Buddha, who proclaimed, “From this day hence, a śrāmaṇerikā ought to study the six

dharmas (six precepts) for two years to determine whether or not she is pregnant.”[13]

Only women eighteen and older are to be given śikṣamāṇā ordination, but there is one exception: a girl who is ten years old and has been married is allowed to take śikṣamāṇā ordination. There are four rules concerning the śikṣamāṇā ordination in the Dharmagupta Vinaya, namely,

- (1) If a bhikṣuṇī does not give the śikṣamāṇā precepts to a woman who is over eighteen, or the full precepts to a woman who is over twenty, she commits a pāyantika;
- (2) If a bhikṣuṇī gives the two-year training in the precepts to a woman over eighteen but does not give her the six precepts, then when she is twenty years old gives her the full precepts, she commits a pāyantika;
- (3) If a ten-year-old girl who has been married has had two years of training in the precepts, a bhikṣuṇī can give her the full ordination when she is twelve years old. If she gives her the precepts when she is younger than twelve, she commits a pāyantika;
- (4) If a bhikṣuṇī ordains many disciples, yet does not teach them for two years nor provide them with two things (i.e., Dharma and the requisites), she commits a pāyantika.[14]

In addition to the ten precepts of the śrāmaṇerikā, a śikṣamāṇā must observe six dharmas. However, the six śikṣamāṇā precepts given in the various Vinaya texts do not agree.[15] In Dharmagupta

p. 512

Vinaya the six dharmas are to abstain from : (1)unchastity and from touching a man, (2) stealing, (3) killing, (4) false speech, (5) eating at improper times, and (6) intoxicants.[16] The Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya gives six dharmas and six anudharma (incidental dharmas). The six dharmas are to abstain from: (1) going along a road alone; (2) crossing a river alone; (3) touching a man's body; (4) sleeping in the same room with a man; (5) acting as a go-between for marriage arrangements; (6) concealing a bhikṣuṇī's pārājika offense. The six anudharmas are to abstain from: (1) touching silver or gold (2) cutting the pubic hair; (3) digging in the ground; (4) cutting trees or grass; (5) eating that which are not received from another; (6) eating leftover food.[17]

Regardless of the number of śikṣamāṇā precepts there are, the purpose is to train in the observance of the precepts strictly and to prepare the śikṣamāṇās for bhikṣuṇī ordination. The Dharmagupta Vinaya specifies that in case of any violation of the śikṣamāṇā precepts, the precepts must be retaken and the śikṣamāṇā has to begin the two-year training all over again.

Before a śrāmaṇerikā may take a śikṣamāṇā ordination, the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha must give its permission. The procedure for śikṣamāṇā ordination involves the candidate, her upādhyāyinī, and the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha. First, the śrāmaṇerikā herself requests permission from the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha by saying,

May the Noble Saṅgha listen! This śrāmaṇerikā so-and-so is requesting the two-year study of the śikṣamāṇā precepts. My upādhyāyinī is so-and-so. May the Saṅgha, out of compassion, grant me the two-year study of the precepts.[18]

After she repeats this request three times, the bhikṣuṇī karma

p. 513

master recites the so called “one-statement and four-karma”[19] on her behalf. This procedure consists of stating the motion once, asking for agreement three times, and stating the decision. The Karma Master introduces the four-fold karma with this motion:

May the Noble Saṅgha of Bhikṣuṇīs listen! This śrāmaṇerikā, so-and-so, has asked the Saṅgha for two-year study of the precepts. Her upādhyāyinī is such-and-such. Now is the proper time for the Saṅgha to grant her the two-year study of the precepts. This is the motion.[20]

After making this statement, the Karma Master Bhikṣuṇī begins the first karma:

May the Noble Saṅgha of Bhikṣuṇīs listen! This śrāmaṇerikā so-and-so has asked the Saṅgha for two-year study of the [śikṣamāṇā] precepts. Her upādhyāyinī is such-and-such. The Saṅgha is to grant her the two-year study of the precepts. If you sanction [this karma], please remain silent. If you don't sanction [this karma], please voice your objection.[21]



The second and the third karmas follow in the same general format. If there is no objection, the Karma Master announces the saṅgha's decision of assent. The upādhyāyinī then states the śikṣamāṇā precepts one by one and asks the śrāmaṇerikā if she will be able to keep them. After the śrāmaṇerikā answers in the affirmative to each precept, the śikṣamāṇā ordination ceremony is complete.

p. 514

### **3. Full Bhikṣuṇī Ordination (upasaṃpadā)**

#### **(1) Full Bhikṣuṇī Ordination from the Bhikṣuṇī Saṅgha**

After a śikṣamāṇā has completed two-year training and been twenty years old, she is eligible to take the upasaṃpadā ordination to become a bhikṣuṇī. First, the śikṣamāṇā should go to a qualified bhikṣuṇī and request that she become her Preceptor (upādhyāyinī). To do this, she says,

I, so-and-so, request your reverence to become my Preceptor. By following your reverence, I will be able to receive the upasaṃpadā ordination.[\[22\]](#)

After this request has been repeated three times, the upādhyāyinī replies, 'Your request is granted.' Then two other precept masters should be chosen. They are the Karmakārikā Bhikṣuṇī and the Instructor Bhikṣuṇī. According to the Dharmagupta Vinaya, in addition to the three preceptors, another seven 'Witness Bhikṣuṇī Masters' should be present at the upasaṃpadā ceremony.[\[23\]](#) The Karmakarika is responsible for carrying out the karmas, while the Instructor Bhikṣuṇī, responsible for determining whether she is qualified to receive the upasaṃpadā ordination, instructs and asks the candidate various questions (antarāyika-dharmas) to determine her qualifications. The Instructor Bhikṣuṇī asks her the questions in a secluded place, because some of the questions are very personal. The number of questions varies in different versions of the Vinaya. There are twenty-four questions in the Pali Vinaya,[\[24\]](#) thirty-two in the Mahāsaṅghika Vinaya,[\[25\]](#) twenty-three in the Dharmagupta

p. 515

Vinaya,[26] and thirty in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya.[27]

After the candidate is found to be pure and free of obstacles to ordination, she can formally receive the full ordination. The Instructor Bhikṣuṇī should inform the Saṅgha by saying, “I have now finished questioning so-and-so, and she is pure. There would be no obstacles to her upasaṃpadā ordination.” Then the Karma Master Bhikṣuṇī recites the three karmas:

May the Noble Saṅgha of Bhikṣuṇīs listen! So-and-so shall receive the upasaṃpadā ordination from such-and-such Upādhyāyinī Bhikṣuṇī. She is pure and has no obstructing dharmas. She has reached the required age (of twenty) and is equipped with a bowl and (five) robes.[28] Now is the proper time for the Saṅgha to grant her upasaṃpadā ordination. If you sanction [this karma], please keep silent. If you do not sanction it, please voice your objections.[29]

This is the first karma. The second and the third follow the same pattern. If there are no objections, the Karma Master Bhikṣuṇī then states the saṅgha decision of assent and the upasaṃpadā before the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha is completed. The śrāmaṇerikā who has completed this ordination is referred to as a 'basic dharma Bhikṣuṇī.'

## **(2) Full Bhikṣuṇī Ordination from the Bhikṣu Saṅgha**

Next is the final step of the bhikṣuṇī ordination, that is, the ordination from the bhikṣu saṅgha. On the same day that the

p. 516

upasaṃpadā ordination is given by the Bhikṣuṇī saṅgha, the bhikṣuṇī precept masters and the candidates ( “basic-dharma bhikṣuṇīs” ) should go to the bhikṣu saṅgha, composed of ten bhikṣu precept masters. First, the Preceptor Bhikṣuṇī asks the bhikṣu saṅgha to grant the upasaṃpadā to the candidate. She makes the request as follows:

May the Noble Saṅgha of Bhikṣus listen! So-and-so has received the upasaṃpadā ordination from Bhikṣuṇī such-and-such. She has been found to be pure and without obstructing dharmas. She has reached the age (of twenty) and is equipped with [five] robes and a bowl. She has studied and

kept the [śikṣamāṇā] precepts purely. Now is the proper time for the Saṅgha to grant her the upasaṃpadā.[30]

The bhikṣu saṅgha expresses its consent by keeping silent. Then the candidate herself must ask the bhikṣu saṅgha to grant her the upasaṃpadā, repeating the request three times. After the request is granted, the Karma Master Bhikṣu asks the candidate about the obstructing dharmas (exactly the same questions already asked by the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha). After the candidate is found to be pure, the Bhikṣu karma master performs the final karmas to grant the upasaṃpadā. These consist of stating the motion once and reciting the three Karmas and stating the final decision. These karmas are the same as recited in the presence of the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha.

In the Dharmagupta Vinaya, after the four karmas are performed the Karma Master Bhikṣu states each of the eight pārājika precepts and asks the candidate if she can keep these eight precepts. He also asks whether she can accept and abide by the four niśraya dharmas (requisites):[31] using robes made of rugs,

p. 517

begging for food, lodging under trees and using urine as medicine.[32] After she responds in the affirmative to all these questions, the upasaṃpadā ordination ceremony is complete, and the candidate becomes a fully ordained bhikṣuṇī.

The ordinations for śrāmaṇerikā, śikṣamāṇā, and bhikṣuṇī are basically the same in various Vinayas, with slight differences. All the Vinaya traditions agree that for a woman to become a fully ordained bhikṣuṇī, she has to go through these three stages. The ordinations of śrāmaṇerikā and śikṣamāṇā have to be given by the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha and the ordination of bhikṣuṇī by both bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī saṅghas. This signifies that the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha has the right and responsibility for screening, accepting, and training its new members.[33] Thus, although the upasaṃpadā ordination has to be taken from both saṅghas, as I.B. Horner said,

If the final decision of allowing a candidate to become a senior rested with the almsmen, the preliminary and formative stages were entrusted to the almswomen. Theirs was the power of acceptance or rejection, and in them

was vested, equally with the men, the knowledge of the qualifications necessary for following the higher path.[34]

In Taiwan many of the bhikṣu vinaya masters who have presided over many of the so-called “triple platform” ordinations[35] fail to see

p. 518

the significance of the role played by the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha in a woman's spiritual process from laywoman to bhikṣuṇī. Therefore, they take women as their disciples, ordain them as śrāmaṇerkā and śikṣamāṇāṇa, and allow nuns to receive the upasaṃpadā ordination from the bhikṣu saṅgha alone, erroneously according the bhikṣu saṅgha full authority for the ordination of women, while in actuality the Buddha entrusted the right and responsibility for training novice nuns to the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha.[36]

## **II. The Establishment of the Chinese Bhikṣuṇī**

### **Lineage**

According to the Ta-sung Seng-shih Lueh (The Brief History of Buddhism in the Sung Dynasty), the first Chinese woman to become a Buddhist nun was named A-pan. No record of the date or details about her life can be found. Strictly speaking, she cannot be called a bhikṣuṇī because she only took refuge with the Triple Jewels and did not take any other precepts, simply because the Vinaya was not available at the time. The earliest translation of the Vinaya was completed by the Vinaya Master Dharmakāla of Central Asia during the Chen-pin period (249~253 A.D.) in Luo-yang. He translated the Seng-chih chieh-hsin, the Essentials of the Mahāsaṅghika Vinaya. In 254 A.D. another Vinaya master Dharmasatya translated the Dharmagupta Karman. This marked the beginning of the bhikṣuṇī ordination strictly following the procedures of the Vinaya. However, the first full ordination of bhikṣuṇīs did not take place until almost two centuries later in 434 A.D.

The Biographies of Bhikṣuṇīs (Pi-ch'iu-ni-chuan) records the

p. 519

biography of the first Chinese Bhikṣuṇī.[37] Her name was Ching-chien and she was born as the daughter of a magistrate in 291 A.D. She was diligent in learning in her childhood and became widowed at an early age. She taught music, writing and reading to the children of the wealthy and nobility. Although she took delight in learning Buddhism, she found no teacher to give her instruction. At last she met the monk Fa-shih, who was versed in Buddhist scriptures, and studied Buddhist teaching under his guidance. One day she said to Fa-shih, “Since the scriptures mention that there are bhikṣus and bhikṣuṇīs, I wish to be ordained as a bhikṣuṇī.” [38] Fa-shih told her that although there were bhikṣus and bhikṣuṇīs in the Western Land (India), in China the precepts were incomplete.[39] Ching-chien asked, “What is the difference between the precepts of bhikṣus and bhikṣuṇīs?” Fa-shih replied, “The foreign monk said that there are five hundred precepts for bhikṣuṇī.” Fa-shih agreed to make inquiries about the bhikṣuṇī precepts and ordination for her. He asked the Monk Jñānagira from the kingdom of Kashmir, who explained, “The precepts for bhikṣuṇīs are basically the same as those for the bhikṣus with only minor differences. But without the proper procedures, nobody can confer the precepts. The nuns can take the ten precepts from the bhikṣu saṅgha, however, they will have no bhikṣuṇī preceptors to depend on for their studies.”[40] Nevertheless, Ching-chien, together with twenty-four other women

p. 520

was ordained by Jñānagira and took the ten precepts of a śrāmaṇerikā.

During the Hsien-kang period (335~342 A.D.) of the Chin Dynasty, the monk Seng-chien brought back from the Central Asian kingdom of Yueh-chih the Mahāsaṅghika Bhikṣuṇī Karman and the Bhikṣuṇī-prātimokṣā. In the first year of Sheng-ping (357 A.D.), the Indian monk Dharmagupta was invited to Luo-yang to setup a precept platform to confer bhikṣuṇī ordination, but the Chinese Monk Tao-ch'ang objected on the basis of the Chieh-yin-yuan-ching (Sūtra of the origin of the Rules).[41] The reason for his objection was probably that aside from the bhikṣus, there were no bhikṣuṇīs in China to confer the ordination. The ordination ceremony went ahead despite his objections and was performed on a ship in the middle of a river. Ching-chien together with three other women became the first bhikṣuṇī in China. More precisely speaking, Ching-chien was the

first Chinese bhikṣuṇī to take the upasaṃpadā only from the bhikṣu saṅgha. However, as all Vinaya systems specify, the upasaṃpadā should not be given by bhikṣus alone, but by both bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī saṅghas. This “incomplete ordination” was not remedied until more than half a century later.

The earliest records of the dual ordination of bhikṣuṇīs can be found in the biographies of Guṇavarman and Saṅghavarman, and the Biographies of Bhikṣuṇīs (Pi-ch'iu-ni chuan). Guṇavarman, a Vinaya master from Kashmir, came to Yang-chou in 430 A.D. and translated many Vinaya texts.<sup>[42]</sup> Saṅghavarman, a Vinaya Master from India, came to Yang-chou four years later in 434. Both of their biographies found in the Kao-seng Chuan (Biographies of

p. 521

Eminent Monks) mention their involvement in the dual ordination of the Chinese bhikṣuṇīs.<sup>[43]</sup> Nevertheless, the most thorough account of the dual ordination is found in the biography of the nun Seng-kuo from the Pi-ch'iu-ni Chuan, one of the first group of Chinese nuns to be fully ordained by both saṅghas.

Seng-kuo had unusually strong faith and devotion, as she had presumably established affinity with the Dharma in her former lives. It was said that “even as a baby at breast, she did not transgress the monastic rule of not eating after mid-day.” She did not get permission to leave the household life until she was twenty-seven. Seng-kuo diligently pursued Buddhist practice and strictly observed the precepts. Her meditation practice was at such a high level that she could meditate from dusk to dawn and “stretching in spirit to the pure realm of the divine, her body stayed behind looking as lifeless as dry wood.”<sup>[44]</sup> Her biography continues to record how she was involved in the first dual ordination in China.

In the sixth year of the Yuan-chia (429 A.D.), a foreign boat captain named Nan-t'i brought eight Buddhist bhikṣuṇī from Sri Lanka to the capital of the Sung dynasty. The Sri Laṅkān nuns stayed at Ching-fu Ssu (Luminous Blessings Monastery). Not long after, they asked Seng-kuo, “Have foreign nuns ever been here before us?”<sup>[45]</sup> Seng-kuo answered that there have been none. The

p. 522

Sri Lankan bhikṣuṇīs then asked if that was the case, how had Chinese nuns taken full ordination from both bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī saṅghas? Seng-kuo replied,

They took the ordination from the bhikṣu saṅgha only. Those women who went through the ritual of entering the monastic life began the reception of monastic obligations. This reception was an expedient to cause people to have great respect for the monastic life. Our eminent model for this expedient is the Buddha's own step-mother, Mahāprajāpatī, who was deemed to have accepted the full monastic obligation by taking on herself, and therefore for all women for all the time, the eight special prohibitions incumbent on women wanting to lead the monastic life. [These she accepted from the Buddha only.] The five hundred women of the Buddha's clan who also left the household life at the same time as Mahāprajāpatī considered her as their instructor.[46]

Although Seng-kuo justified the validity of the single-ordination observed by the Chinese bhikṣuṇīs, taking the case of Mahāprajāpatī as a good example and precedent, she herself still had some doubts. So she consulted with Vinaya Master Guṇavarman about whether it was permissible to retake the ordination. Guṇavarman replied,

[The Buddhist threefold action of] morality, meditation, and wisdom progresses from the subtle to the obvious. Therefore, receiving the monastic obligations a second time is of greater benefit than receiving them only once.[47]

p. 523

Answering the question of the validity of the single-ordination taken by the Chinese bhikṣuṇīs, Guṇavarman said,

As the bhikṣuṇī ordination is finalized by the bhikṣu saṅgha, even if the “basic dharma” (i.e. the ordination taken from the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha) is not

conferred, the bhikṣuṇī ordination still results in pure vows, just as in the case of Mahāprajāpatī.[48]

Responding to Seng-kuo's question of the possibility of re-ordination, Guṇavarman replied,

Very good! If you wish to increase your wisdom [by retaking the ordination], I will certainly offer my help with joy. However, since the Sri Lankan bhikṣuṇīs [who are in China] have not reached their “precept age,”[49] and their number is less than ten,[50] they should first start learning the Chinese language.[51]

Four years later in the tenth year of Yuanchia (433 A.D.), the ship captain, Nan-t'i, brought back eleven more bhikṣuṇīs from Sri Lanka, including one named Tessara. By this time those bhikṣuṇīs who had arrived earlier had become fluent in Chinese, and Guṇavarman had passed away. Thus, Seng-kuo and the other Chinese bhikṣuṇīs requested the Indian Vinaya Master Saṅghavarman to preside over the dual ordination at the ceremonial platform in Nan-lin Monastery. Altogether more than three hundred women were ordained by both saṅghas. This marked the beginning of the proper transmission of dual ordination for women in China, that is, of receiving the precepts from both bhikṣu and

p. 524

bhikṣuṇī saṅghas.[52]

According to the brief history of the dual ordination in China related above, two things are clear:

(1) The single-ordination conferred since Ching-chien in 357 A.D. was valid and pure. As Tao-hsuan (596~667 A.D.), the Patriarch of the Chinese Dharmagupta Vinaya School, stated in the Ssu-fen-lu Che-mo Shu Chi-yen Chi:

Even if a bhikṣuṇī ordination is transmitted directly from a bhikṣu saṅgha without first conferring the “basic dharma,” it is still valid, as nowhere in the Vinaya indicates otherwise. However, the precept masters commit an offence.[53]

All the Vinayas of the different Buddhist schools specify the requirement of dual ordination. Although it is true that, strictly speaking, a single-ordination from either the



bhikṣu or bhikṣuṇī saṅgha alone is not in accord with the Vinaya, still nowhere does the Vinaya indicate that single-ordination is invalid. Tao-hsuan did not explain why the precept masters commit an offence, but it presumably had to do with not following the procedures strictly. When asked the same question,[54] Guṇavarman answered,

p. 525

“Wherever bhikṣuṇīs are available, if a bhikṣu preceptor confers a bhikṣuṇī ordination to a woman without having first trained her in the precepts for two years, he commits an offence.” [55] This means that a bhikṣu commits an offence if he knowingly gives bhikṣuṇī ordination to a woman who has not gone through all the necessary stages (śrāmaṇerikā, śikṣamāṇā, and bhikṣuṇī ordination) from a bhikṣuṇī saṅgha. As discussed previously, before a bhikṣu gives the bhikṣuṇī ordination, he has to ask the woman whether she has been trained in the śikṣamāṇā vows for two years, and whether she has already received ordination from the bhikṣuṇī saṅghas. If he does not ask these questions or knowingly ordains a woman without śikṣamāṇā or “basic-dharma bhikṣuṇī” status, he, not the woman, commits an offense. The general rule for the outcome of this improper conferring of the ordination is that “the precept receiver obtains the precepts, whereas the precept giver commits an offense.” Here the main issue is not what offense a bhikṣu commits for giving the upasaṃpadā to a woman who has not received ordination from the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha first. The important point is that an ordination by the bhikṣu saṅgha only, even technically flawed with respect to prescribed procedures, is still valid and a woman taking such an ordination obtains “uncorrupted” and pure vows.

(2) From the brief history of the dual ordination in China, it is clear that the first dual ordination which took place in 434 followed the proper procedures, and the bhikṣuṇī lineage thus established was pure and flawless. However, during the Conference held in Dharamsala in August, 1998, Dao-hai, a conservative vinaya master from Taiwan argued otherwise. For two reasons, he argued that the Chinese Bhikṣuṇī lineage could not be considered “perfect and flawless.” The first reason is that Seng-kuo and other nuns had previously received bhikṣuṇī ordination from bhikṣus alone and thus

p. 526

“not a new one.” Dao-hai contends that such an ordination would invalidate subsequent ordinations, though there is nothing in the Vinaya to substantiate his claim. The second reason is that Hui-kuo and other nuns were not trained in the precepts for two years prior to their dual ordination, although there is no evidence to support this contention.[56]

As the history of the initial dual ordination indicates, after the arrival of the second group of Sri Lankan bhikṣuṇīs, which made up the necessary quorum of ten, Seng-kuo and many other nuns took the upasaṃpadā first from the Sri Lankan Bhikṣuṇī saṅgha and then from the bhikṣu saṅgha headed by Saṅghavarman as the Preceptor in the very first dual ordination in China. How can this first dual ordination be considered “not a new one,” and thus “incomplete” ? Even if it were a re-ordination, nowhere does the Vinaya indicate that re-ordination is invalid. On the contrary, re-ordination was considered a re-affirmation. This can be attested to by the affirmation given in the Sarvāstivāda Śāstra (Sa-po-lo Lun), which says, “To re-ordain enhances the quality of a previous ordination. One who is re-ordained does not lose one's previous precept age.[57]”[58] Therefore, Tao-hai's theory which dismisses the Chinese Bhikṣuṇī lineage on these grounds is not credible.

Dao-hai also strongly asserted that Seng-kuo and the other nuns had not taken the śikṣamāṇā ordination and thus had not trained in the precepts for two years, but he did not provide any textual proof for this claim. In fact it can be argued that the nuns had trained for two years. The first group of Sri Lankan bhikṣuṇīs

p. 527

stayed at Ching-fu-ssu, the monastery where Seng-kuo and other nuns lived, for four years before the arrival of the second group. During these four years, it is quite likely that the Sri Lankan bhikṣuṇīs conferred the śikṣamāṇā ordination on the Chinese nuns to prepare them for the dual ordination. They must have been very keen to make sure that complete and proper ordination procedures for the nuns' ordinations were observed; otherwise they would not have raised the question concerning the validity of the previous single-ordination. Even if the Chinese nuns did not formally train in the precepts for two years, their dual ordination was still valid and pure, because, as mentioned before, the fault for conferring the ordination improperly falls on the bhikṣu precept masters, not on the bhikṣuṇī precept candidates.

We can conclude that an authentic bhikṣuṇī lineage in China was properly established according to the Vinaya in the fifth century. This lineage continues without interruption up to the present day. There is no record that indicates otherwise.



various historical records, such as dynastic histories, epitaphs, bronze and stone inscriptions, etc. Many of the bhikṣuṇīs were outstanding in teaching, meditation, and moral discipline. In the Ch'an School some bhikṣuṇīs also became teachers of Ch'an monks.[62]

p. 529

Although Buddhism suffered a great setback and lost much of its vitality due to T'ang Emperor Wu-tsung's persecution that lasted from 841 to 845 C.E., it survived intact.[63] In fact, the census taken during the reign of Emperor Cheng-tsung of the Sung Dynasty (997~1021 C.E.) reveals that there were more than 397,000 bhikṣus and 61,000 bhikṣuṇīs at the time.[64] As for the lineage of dual ordination, there is no record of any break. On the contrary, there are two records in the Ta-sung seng shih lueh that clearly indicate that dual ordination was conferred during the eighth and ninth centuries. This document records that in 765 C.E. Emperor Tai-tsung of T'ang decreed that an ordination platform be established in the capital city and that ten bhikṣus and ten bhikṣuṇīs of great virtue and well versed in the Vinaya be selected to confer the ordination. It also records that this “became the standard practice forever.”[65] The Ta-sung seng-shih lueh also documents that Emperor Yi-tsung of T'ang (859~873 C.E.) had an ordination platform built in the Hsien-tai Palace where the nuns of Fu-shou Nunnery received an ordination conferred by ten bhikṣus and ten bhikṣuṇīs.[66] This indicates that the dual ordination was a standard practice.

It is well documented that the dual ordination was carried out from the fifth to the ten centuries. However, in the fifth year of the Kai-pao year (972 C.E.) the Northern Sung Emperor T'ai-tsu issued a decree that bhikṣuṇīs be prohibited from going to bhikṣu

p. 530

monasteries for ordination.[67] This means that nuns would have to take the upasaṃpadā from the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha only. Vinaya master Dao-hai from Taiwan, drawing on this record, concludes:

In a word, the lineage of bhikṣuṇī ordination in China has clearly been broken (to receive base rules from a saṅgha consisting of bhikṣuṇīs only, not to mention receiving one-group ordination from bhikṣus) during Sung Dynasty (around C.E. 972). Following the resolution of the prohibition, most of the ordinations were one-group from a saṅgha of bhikṣu. There is no historical documentation that proved that the lineage of two-group ordination were pure and complete.[68]

This speculative and incorrect conclusion is drawn without any textual proof. Actually, there are textual references that indicate otherwise. The earliest record of prohibition is found in the Ta-sung seng-shih lueh written by Tsan-ning:

After the years of Chien-wu (335~348 C.E.), the nuns had been going to the monasteries of monks to take ordination without interruption throughout all the previous dynasties. Recently Emperor T'ai-tsu (972 C.E.) issued an edict forbidding nuns from going to the monasteries of monks to take ordination. After that, the nuns obtained the “basic dharma” from the saṅgha of bhikṣuṇīs alone. The ordination was not complete. Now the present Emperor [T'ai-tsung, the successor of T'ai-tsu] is sagacious and makes intelligent decisions. Those who are protective to the Dharma should make a request to the Emperor to restore the old practice [of dual ordination] lest the Dharma should perish.[69]

Four years after the decree of prohibition issued in 976,

p. 531

Emperor T'ai-tsu died and his son T'ai-tsung succeeded him. In the same year Tsan-ling compiled the Ta-sung seng-shih lueh (The Brief History of the Buddhist Saṅgha in the Great Sung) by order of Emperor T'ai-tsung. Taking into consideration that Tsan-ling was an eminent and learned monk respected and trusted by Emperor T'ai-tsung, and was ordered by him to compile the history of the saṅgha and biographies of eminent monks, and also considering that Tsan-ling was very concerned with the effect that the edict might have upon Buddhism, it is possible that he himself made the request to the Emperor to abolish the edict. There is also evidence indicating that the edict lasted for only a few years, certainly not long enough to disrupt the bhikṣuṇī lineage.

The first evidence that the edict was short-lived is Emperor Chen-tsung's (997~1021 A.D.) edict of 1010 C.E., which states:

The edict ordered that in the T'ai-pien Hsing-kuo Monastery in the imperial city, the official Kan-lu Precept-platform be established [to give ordination] and the other official precept-platforms be established all over the country, totally seventy-two.[70]

The precept platforms were built by the court and thus naturally regarded as official. That means that all monks and nuns went to the official precept platforms to take ordination; therefore nuns were able to get dual ordination as usual. Since only thirty-eight years elapsed between the edict of prohibition and the edict of re-establishing the official precept platforms, this would not be long enough for the lineage to totally die out, even in the worst case scenario.

The second source of evidence comes from Chih-p'an's Fo-tsu T'ung-chi (compiled between 1258~1269).[71] Chih-p'an comments

p. 532

on the edict of prohibition:

The intention [of the edict] was to keep distance between monks and nuns [not to forbid nuns from taking ordination]. However, [Emperor T'ai-tsu] did not know that nuns must take the final ordination from the Bhikṣu saṅgha. There is no rule [in the Vinaya] that allows nuns to take ordination from their own saṅgha only. This [edict] was only a temporary remedy for impropriety and should not be taken as a normal practice. Nowadays the edict is no longer in effect.[72]

It is obvious that by the time of Chih-p'an, the prohibition had already been lifted and the dual ordination was restored. This passage lends credence to the theory that dual ordination was the norm during this period.

There are not many historical documents that indicate how the dual ordination was implemented after the thirteenth century, however, it is clear that the lineage of dual ordination for bhikṣuṇīs continued, for at least two historical records of the practice can be found. The first is from Hung-tsan's Pi-ch'iu-ni Shou-chieh Lu (The Record of the bhikṣuṇī Ordination) and the

second is from Shu-yu's Erh-pu-seng Shou-chieh Yi-shih (The Ritual for the Dual Ordination).

Hung-tsan (1611~1685), a Vinaya Master of the Ch'ing Dynasty (1644~1912), mentions in his Pi-ch'iu-ni Shou-chieh Lu in 1657 C.E., when he was in Kuang-chou, many nuns coming from different counties asked him to give them the upasaṃpadā ordination. Hung-tsan thus got together ten bhikṣus and ten bhikṣuṇīs to confer the dual ordination.[73] Shu-yu (1645~1721 C.E.) was also a Vinaya Master. In the preface of his Erh-pu-seng Shou-chieh Yi-shih, he recorded a dual ordination:

In the spring of 1667 C.E., the Venerable Bhikṣuṇī Mi-chau from

p. 533

Kun-shan and Madame Hsu came to our monastery to make offerings. The accompanying śikṣamāṇās made a request to my late Master to give a dual ordination. They stayed at the monastery to study for half a month and were able to know the proper departments. My late master then asked Bhikṣuṇī Mi-chau to be the Upādhyāyinī, Bhikṣuṇī Chau-tseng from Yang-chou to be the Karma Master, and bhikṣuṇī Yuan-cheng from Chen-chou to be the Instructor Master. He also chose seven other virtuous bhikṣuṇīs as Witness Masters to preside over the ordination.[74]

From the above two records, it is very clear that during the seventeenth century the dual ordination was still being carefully implemented, and the proper procedures were being observed. However, Hung-tsan also says that “the dual ordination had been long lost.”[75] Probably what he meant was that the nuns only took the ordination from the bhikṣu saṅgha alone. However, so far no historical record can be found to verify his statement. Even if Hung-tsan was right, the ordination from bhikṣu saṅgha only, as discussed early in this paper, is still valid, although the precept master conferring it commits an offense.

There is another record that indicates the dual ordination had been discontinued. In his Essence of the Vinaya, Vinaya Master Hung-yi (1880~1942) wrote,

According to the rules set by the Buddha, bhikṣuṇīs must take their ordination twice. First, they take the “basic dharma” from the bhikṣuṇī

saṅgha, and then the vows are taken formally from the bhikṣu saṅgha. The ordination actually takes effect during the ceremony with the bhikṣu saṅgha. However, the dual ordination rule has not been implemented since the Southern Sung Dynasty (1128~1276).[76]

p. 534

Although Hung-yi was a respectable Vinaya master, his statement is obviously incorrect. This can be proved by the fact that dual ordinations were given to nuns during the seventeenth century, as Hung-tsan and Shu-yu's writings show.

After Hung-tsan and Shu-yu, the tradition of bhikṣuṇī ordination continued until today. Although it is true that in some cases the dual ordination procedure has not been strictly observed,[77] still the bhikṣuṇī ordination and the lineage of Chinese Bhikṣuṇīs continue. In other words, in the historical records there is no evidence indicating that there is any time in Chinese Buddhist history when there were no bhikṣuṇīs.

### **III. A Comparison of the Dharmagupta and the Mūlasarvāstivādin Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣa Sūtras**

Aside from a concern for the validity of the Chinese Bhikṣuṇī lineage, Tibetan Buddhist scholars have also been very concerned with the differences between the Dharmagupta Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣa Sūtra followed by the Chinese Bhikṣu and Bhikṣuṇī saṅghas and the Mūlasarvāstivāda followed by the Tibetan Bhikṣu saṅgha. The Dharmagupta Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣa Sūtra was translated into Chinese in the Later Chin Dynasty (383~418 C.E.) by Buddhayaśas. This text has been exclusively followed by the Chinese bhikṣuṇī since the T'ang Dynasty when the Dharmagupta Vinaya School was established. There are two Chinese translations of the Mulasarvastivadin Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣā and Vinaya: one is the Ken-pen Shou-yi-ch'ieh-you-pu Pi-ch'iu-ni Chieh-ching (T.24, no.1455) and the other Ken-pen Shou-yi-chieh-you-pu Pi-chi'iu-ni Pi-na-yeh. (T.23, no.1443) Both of these texts were translated by Yi-ching during the T'ang Dynasty. There



are also two Tibetan translations of the

p. 535

Mulasarvativadin Bhikṣuṇī Vinaya: the Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣā Sūtra (Dge slon mahi so sor thar pahi mdo) and the Bhikṣuṇī Vinaya-vibhaṅga (Dge slon mahi hdul ba rnam par hbyed pa), although the texts exist, no Tibetan Bhikṣuṇī lineage has ever been established based on these texts.

Much important research on Bhikṣuṇī Vinaya and Prātimokṣā Sūtras translated from Sanskrit have been done by scholars. For example, Akira Hirakawa's Ritsuzo no Kenkyo (Studies on the Vinaya Scriptures) has a section on the Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣā Sūtra from various vinaya traditions, Karma Lekshe Tsomo's Sisters in Solitude contains English translations of the Chinese Dharmagupta and the Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣa as well as a comparative study on these two traditions, and Chatsumarn Kabilsingh's A comparative Study of Bhikkhunī Pātimokkha. This section of the paper is based on their research.

Despite minor variation in the number of the precepts, the categories of precepts cited in the Dharmagupta and the Mūlasarvāstivāda Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣa Sūtras are identical, namely, the pārājika-dharma, saṅghāvaśesa-d, niḥsargika-d, pāyantika-d, pratideśanīya-d, śaikṣa-d, and adhikaraṇa-śamatha-d. The number of precepts in each category is given as follows:[78]

	Dharmagupta (Chinese)	Mūlasarvāstivāda (Tibetan)
Pārājika	8	8
Saṅghāvaśesa	17	20
Niḥsargika- pāyantika	30	33
Pāyantika	178	180
Pratideśanīya	8	11
Śaikṣa	100	113
Adhikaraṇa-śamatha	7	7
	348	372

The eight pārājika offenses for bhikṣuṇīs are basically the same

not only in the Dharmagupta and Mūlasarvāstivāda versions, but in all extant versions of Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣā. The eight pārājikas include prohibitions against (1) sexual conduct, (2) stealing, (3) taking life, (4) falsely claiming the attainment of supernatural powers, (5) touching a male's body or being touched with desire, (6) touching a man's clothes or entering a covered place with a man, (7) concealing the wrongdoing of a bhikṣuṇī guilty of a serious offence, and (8) persistently following a suspended monk, after the third admonishment. They are identical in the two versions however, the Mūlasarvāstivādin Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣā includes the prohibition against taking the life of a human fetus (in other words, abortion), while the Chinese Dharmagupta text makes no mention of a fetus.

The category of saṅghāvaśesa has 17 precepts in the Dharmagupta and 20 in the Mūlasarvāstivāda. Of the seventeen saṅghāvaśesa in the Dharmagupta, only one has no equivalent among those in the Mūlasarvāstivāda, namely, accusing a layperson before a government official. The Mūlasarvāstivāda has one saṅghāvaśesa which has no equivalent in the Dharmagupta, namely, pursuing the wealth of the deceased. The reason that there is a difference in the number of saṅghāvaśesas between the two versions, 17 versus 20, is because the seventh saṅghāvaśesa of the Dharmagupta combines the four 'alone precepts,' into one, while the Mūlasarvāstivāda takes them separately. These precepts include crossing water alone, entering a village alone, staying overnight in a village alone, and staying behind the group alone.

According to Karma Lekshe Tsomo, only two out of the seventeen saṅghāvaśesas in the Chinese version have no equivalent among the saṅghāvaśesas in the Tibetan translation: accusing a lay-person before a government official and ordaining a woman known to be a thief. On the other hand, six saṅghāvaśesas in the Tibetan translation have no equivalent in the Chinese, though some occur elsewhere: (1) ordaining a woman without permission from her guardian, (2) pursuing the wealth of the deceased, (3) forsaking the

Dharma, (4) digging up faults of bhikṣuṇīs, (5) misbehaving with women,

(6) and enjoining bhikṣuṇīs who are misbehaving together not to live separately.[79]

In the category of the niḥsargika-pāyantika, all Vinayas list thirty precepts, except the Mūlasarvāstivāda, which has thirty-three precepts. Among the thirty, sixteen precepts concern robes and the proper time and manner to obtain them; two concern the begging bowl; one concern medication; eight concerning business exchange; and three concern gold and silver.[80] There is one niḥsargika- pāyāntika in the Dharmagupta that has no equivalent in the Mūlasarvāstivāda: accepting a robe in an emergency and keeping it beyond the proper time. There are four rules in the Mūlasarvāstivāda that have no equivalent in the Dharmagupta: washing clothes and cooking for an unrelated bhikṣu, taking a robe from an unrelated bhikṣu, having one's upper robe blessed on a new moon, and openly begging for oneself.

In the category of the pāyantika, the Dharmagupta has 178 precepts, while the Mūlasarvāstivāda has 180. Among these precepts, there are three which occur only in the Dharmagupta, while there are thirty precepts that occur only in the Mūlasarvāstivāda.[81]

A number of pāyantikas deal with offenses related to ordination. For example, there are twelve precepts common to both the Dharmagupta and Mūlasarvāstivāda, including ordaining (1) a pregnant woman, (2) a śrāmaṇerikā not trained for two years in the six rules, (3) a married girl less than 12 years, (4) a married girl of 12 years but not agreed upon by the saṅgha, (5) a prostitute, (6) a woman with a husband, (7) a woman less than twenty years old, and (8) an emotionally disturbed woman; the other precepts

p. 538

include: (9) after giving ordination, not taking care of one's trainee; (10) not ordaining a well-qualified śikṣamāṇā; (11) not going before the bhikṣu saṅgha on the same day as the ordination with the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha; (12) giving full ordination before one has been a bhikṣuṇī for twelve years.[82]

There are several pāyantika precepts that are not found in the Mūlasarvāstivāda, namely, ordaining a woman with both male and female organs, ordaining a woman who discharges urine and excrement from one's

orifice, and ordaining a woman who is nursing. The rule that a bhikṣuṇī cannot give ordination every year (that is, a bhikṣuṇī can only ordain disciples every other year) is found only in the Mūlasarvāstivāda. It is worth mentioning that although the eight gurudharmas specify that a woman should take full ordination from both saṅghas, among all the Vinaya traditions, only the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya contains a precept against ordaining a woman by one saṅgha only.

There is a very important principle behind all these rules concerning bhikṣuṇī ordination. That is, no offense is incurred by women who receive ordination in violation of these rules; instead, an offence is entailed on the part of bhikṣus or bhikṣuṇīs who gave ordination (i.e., precept masters). For example, during the Buddha's time, it happened that a woman was ordained and found herself pregnant later. Although such a physical condition would be a hindrance to her religious life, the Buddha did not invalidate her ordination. Instead, he allowed her to give birth to her child and raised it among the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha.<sup>[83]</sup> Therefore, ordaining a pregnant woman was prohibited, but in case of an infraction of this precept, rather than on the woman herself, the fault is on the bhikṣu or bhikṣuṇī who knowingly gives ordination to a pregnant woman. The principle that the precept masters take the blame in

p. 539

case of a violation against the ordination rules applies similarly to the dual ordination. That is to say, if bhikṣu precept masters give full ordination to women who have not taken full ordination from the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha first, the women commit no offence; rather, the bhikṣu precept masters commit an offence. The rationale for this principle is that the precept masters should know the rules better than the precept receivers; therefore, the fault falls on them rather than the precept receivers should any violation of the ordination rules occur. As a result, even if such an infraction should occur, the bhikṣuṇīs who receive ordination from bhikṣu saṅgha alone still obtain a pure and flawless ordination.

In the pratideśanīya category, all Vinaya traditions have eight rules, except the Mūlasarvāstivāda that has eleven. In the Dharmagupta, the eight rules are asking for the following foods when a bhikṣuṇī is not sick: cheese, oil, honey, sugar, milk, cream, fish, and meat. In the Mūlasarvāstivāda we find

milk, yogurt, butter, ghee, oil, honey, sugar, fish, meat, dried meat, and partaking of food in a learner's house without being invited.

Finally, in the śaikṣa category, the Dharmagupta has 100 rules while the Mūlasarvāstivāda has 99, however, the contents of the rules differ considerably.[84] Here is a list of the number of rules in different śaikṣa categories:[85]

Different sections	Dharmagupta	Mūlasarvāstivāda
1. Manner of wearing robes	2	12
2. Manners of entering a devotees house	25	26
3. Manners of accepting and eating food	23	35
4. Manners of exhortation	20	22
p. 540		
5. Manner of urinating and passing excrement	3	3
6. Climbing a tree higher than the height of a human being	1	1
7. Behavior related to cetiya	26	0
	100	99

The most apparent difference between the two renditions is that the Dharmagupta has 26 rules related to cetiya. This difference reflects the great importance the Dharmagupta School places on the worship of cetiya.

The last category of bhikṣuṇī precepts includes the seven adhikaraṇa-śamatha rules which are the same in both Vinaya traditions. These rules deal with legal questions regarding to the settling of disputes about the Dharma and the Vinaya.

The above brief comparison shows how the precepts in the Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣā Sūtras of these two Vinaya traditions agree and differ from each

other. They do not differ much regarding the more important precepts in the pārajika, saṅghāvaśesa and niḥsargika-pāyantika categories. Most of the differences are found in the śaikṣa rules: the manner of accepting and eating food, behavior related to cetiyas, etc. These rules are basically the guidelines for daily conduct and decorum for the bhikṣuṇīs, and do not have much to do with fundamental ethics and morality. Inasmuch as they do not come under any penal section, there is no punishment for violating any of them; a transgression is not considered a criminal act, but simply bad manners.[86] Some of the rules seem unrealistic and archaic and can therefore be considered “lesser and minor precepts” that can legitimately be abolished.[87] For example, one śaikṣa rule

p. 541

requires a bhikṣuṇī “not to give teachings while standing to one who is sitting, unless the person is sick.” Obviously this reflects modes of behavior current at the time, but the application of this rule is somewhat irrelevant in the present day.

In sum, if Tibetan Buddhism were to establish a bhikṣuṇī lineage based on both the Dharmagupta and Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinayas, it would not cause any serious problem in terms of keeping precepts, because even though there are differences between the Dharmagupta and Mūlasarvāstivāda Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣās, the differences are minor and their essence is the same.

## **IV. The Possible Establishment of a Tibetan Bhikṣuṇī**

### **Lineage**

In light of the discussion above, there are two possible ways to establish a Tibetan Bhikṣuṇī saṅgha. One is through dual ordination by both bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī saṅghas, and the other is through single ordination from the bhikṣu saṅgha only. Ordination by bhikṣuṇīs alone can be ruled out because it is specifically prohibited in the eight gurudharmas, the Bhikṣuṇī karman, and the commentaries of all Vinaya traditions.

#### **I. Ordination from both Bhikṣu and Bhikṣuṇī Saṅghas**

As the eight gurudharmas specify, a bhikṣuṇī should receive a full ordination from both bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī saṅghas. If the Tibetan Buddhist tradition is to establish a bhikṣuṇī lineage through dual ordination strictly according the Vinaya, it has to depend on a Buddhist tradition that has a living bhikṣuṇī saṅgha. At present, the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha exists only in China, Taiwan, Korea, and Vietnam. Since the Korean and Vietnamese Bhikṣuṇī lineages were both received from China, it is better that Tibetan Buddhism seek the help of the Chinese Bhikṣuṇī saṅgha.

Although Tibetan Buddhism has śrāmaṇerikās, they are ordained by Tibetan bhikṣus, not by bhikṣuṇīs. Strictly speaking, this is not in accord with the Vinaya, which specifies that women should be

p. 542

ordained at each and every stage (i.e., śrāmaṇerikā, śikṣamāṇā, and “basic dharma bhikṣuṇī” ) by the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha. Therefore, to establish a bhikṣuṇī lineage, Tibetan Buddhists can ask elder, respected Chinese bhikṣuṇīs to ordain lay women in the Tibetan tradition as śrāmaṇerikās. When the śrāmaṇerikās become eighteen years old, the Chinese bhikṣuṇī masters can give them śikṣamāṇā ordination and train them for two years in the six śikṣamāṇā precepts. The two years' training is very important in that the novices are tested to see whether they can keep the precepts, and whether they are determined enough to lead a vigorously religious life. After two years of training, the Chinese bhikṣuṇī precept masters should give them the full ordination (upasamṇadā). Ten bhikṣuṇī precept masters, who must have been bhikṣuṇīs for at least twelve years, are needed to give the ordination. After taking this ordination from the Chinese Bhikṣuṇī saṅgha, the Tibetan nuns become “basic-dharma bhikṣuṇīs.”

The final stage of the full ordination is taking the ordination from the bhikṣu saṅgha. The Tibetan “basic-dharma” bhikṣuṇīs have two choices, that is, they can take the full ordination either from the Chinese Bhikṣu saṅgha or Tibetan Bhikṣu saṅgha. Taking the matter of Vinaya lineage into consideration, it is probably better that the Tibetan “basic-dharma bhikṣuṇīs” take the ordination from the Tibetan Bhikṣu saṅgha. This way, when the Tibetan bhikṣu precept masters give the ordination, they can transmit the Mūlasarvāstivādin bhikṣuṇī prātimokṣa to the Tibetan “basic-dharma bhikṣuṇīs,” and no problem will arise as a result of the

bhikṣus and bhikṣuṇīs following different Vinaya lineages. As for the śrāmaṇerikā and śikṣamāṇā ordinations previously taken from the Chinese Bhikṣuṇī saṅgha, there would be no problem, since the ten śrāmaṇerikā precepts and the six śikṣamāṇā precepts are basically the same in the Dharmagupta and Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinayas.

In other words, the first Tibetan bhikṣuṇī dual ordination is to be conferred by a Chinese Bhikṣuṇī saṅgha in conjunction with

p. 543

Tibetan bhikṣus. Tibetan Buddhists can take the first dual ordination of Bhikṣuṇīs in China as a precedent. As discussed above, the Chinese nuns received the dual ordination from the Sri Lankan Bhikṣuṇī Saṅgha and the Chinese Bhikṣu Saṅgha. Although it is not known precisely which Vinaya tradition was transmitted to the Chinese bhikṣuṇīs, it apparently was not the Theravāda Vinaya followed by the Sri Lankan bhikṣuṇīs. In other words, it is likely that the initial dual ordination of Bhikṣuṇī in China itself was a combination of two different Vinaya traditions. This is significant in that no question has ever been raised concerning the validity of this lineage.

A dual ordination conferred by the Chinese Bhikṣuṇī saṅgha and the Tibetan Bhikṣu saṅgha could be given continuously for twelve years until finally there would be a group of Tibetan bhikṣuṇīs who have been ordained for the required twelve years and would therefore be qualified to conduct the ordination themselves.<sup>[88]</sup> According to the Mūlasarvātivāda tradition, the Tibetan bhikṣuṇīs would need to be at least twelve in number. After maintaining the bhikṣuṇī precepts for 12 years, they would be qualified to serve as precept masters to Tibetan nuns. After that, Tibetan Buddhism would no longer have to depend on Chinese bhikṣuṇīs for conducting the dual ordination.

## **2. Ordination by the Tibetan Bhikṣu Saṅgha Alone**

If the Tibetan Buddhist tradition wants to avoid combining two different Vinaya traditions in establishing its bhikṣuṇī saṅgha, it can do it by depending on its own bhikṣu saṅgha without help from Chinese bhikṣuṇīs. As discussed above, the Indian Vinaya Master



Guṇavarman as well as Chinese Vinaya Master Tao-hsuan asserted that a single ordination from the bhikṣu saṅgha alone and a dual ordination from both saṅgha are not different in terms of the validity of the ordination. In other words, regardless of the procedure used, both types of full bhikṣuṇī ordination result in pure and flawless vows for the bhikṣuṇī ordination candidate. The only difference is that the bhikṣus who give the single ordination commit an offense of pāyantika. What the Tibetan tradition could do is have ten Tibetan bhikṣu precept masters give the bhikṣuṇī ordination according to the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya to a group of Tibetan nuns. As a result, the Tibetan nuns would become bhikṣuṇīs, while the bhikṣus would commit a pāyantika. Since these Tibetan precept masters commit a pāyantika and would have to confess their transgression, it would be better not to have the same group of precept masters give the bhikṣuṇī ordination every time, so that they will not commit the same offense again and again.[\[89\]](#)

Theoretically, the establishment of a Tibetan Bhikṣuṇī lineage by the Tibetan Bhikṣu saṅgha is feasible. The Tibetan tradition could initiate a dual ordination of bhikṣuṇīs as soon as the first group of at least twelve Tibetan bhikṣuṇīs, ordained by the Tibetan Bhikṣu saṅgha, had been ordained for twelve years. The feasibility and validity of such an ordination is based on the assumption that the bhikṣu saṅgha has the final authority in the bhikṣuṇī ordination process. The initial ordination process by Tibetan bhikṣus alone would be justified, because no Tibetan bhikṣuṇīs are currently available to give the bhikṣuṇī ordination. If all schools of Tibetan Buddhism come to a consensus and agree that a bhikṣuṇī ordination conducted by the Tibetan Bhikṣu saṅgha alone is valid, under these circumstances, most of the problems concerning the

establishment of a bhikṣuṇī lineage will be solved. However, the Tibetan Buddhists who choose this solution may be challenged, when a valid lineage exists, as to why they do not seek the help of the Chinese bhikṣuṇīs. If the Chinese nuns could seek help from Sri Lankan bhikṣuṇīs in the fifth century, how much more easily Tibetan Buddhists could get the help of the Chinese bhikṣuṇīs today. Not to seek the help of a recognized extant bhikṣuṇī

lineage when the Chinese bhikṣuṇīs are ready and willing to help and to continue questioning the purity of their lineage could be taken as an affront.

Although either way of establishing a Tibetan Buddhist Bhikṣuṇī lineage suggested here are slightly flawed, both ways are feasible because neither is against the principles or spirit of the Mūlasarvāstivādin and Dharmagupta Vinayas. Tibetan Buddhism is known for putting great importance on unbroken lineages. Since a Mūlasarvāstivādin bhikṣuṇī lineage cannot be found anywhere in the world today, the Tibetans will have to choose between either a dual ordination with the help of the bhikṣuṇī lineage of other traditions or a single-ordination from their own bhikṣu saṅgha. To choose the first way, Tibetan Buddhism would have to accept the fact that the Chinese Bhikṣuṇī lineage has continued unbroken since its establishment in the fifth century, and that the conjunction of two different lineages poses no problem because all Vinaya lineages derive from the Buddha. If they choose the second way, the Tibetans have to accept the premise that an ordination from the bhikṣu saṅgha alone is valid when a bhikṣuṇī saṅgha is not available. Tibetan bhikṣus have been giving śrāmaṇerikā ordination to women for centuries and consider this practice valid because of the unavailability of bhikṣuṇīs. Using the same logic, they can legitimize giving Tibetan nuns bhikṣuṇī ordination.[\[90\]](#) Besides,

p. 546

nowhere does any Vinaya specify that a bhikṣuṇī ordination by bhikṣu saṅgha only, even though incomplete, is invalid. All that is required is that certain Tibetan bhikṣus be willing to take the lead in initiating the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha in the Tibetan tradition.

## **Conclusion**

To establish a Tibetan Bhikṣuṇīs lineage involves large and complex issues. The issues include the doctrinal, the social (the passivity of the uneducated Tibetan nuns themselves and the activism of Western nuns), cultural (conservatism of the bhikṣus), the political (Chinese government resistance to any kind of Buddhist activity), etc. This paper only deals with the doctrinal issues of what constitutes an authentic ordination, the validity of the Chinese Bhikṣuṇī lineage, and the compatibility of the Dharmagupta and Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinayas. In the light of these arguments, it can be

concluded that all traditional Buddhist criteria for the establishment of a Bhikṣuṇī lineage in Tibet are fulfilled. Hesitancy to find a way to initiate Bhikṣuṇī ordination by Tibetan Institution could be viewed as sexism of patriarchal culture, whose only function is to prevent the fulfillment of the Dharma, of the world's need for the Dharma, and of the practice needs of Tibetan Buddhist women.

Although Tibetan nuns (śrāmaṇerikās) have been in existence for many centuries, they have never enjoyed the same level of support as monks have and have always faced more obstacles. Bhikṣuṇī ordination is the right and obligation of a nun. Any decision regarding the establishment of a Tibetan bhikṣuṇī lineage should be taken from a stance of compassion for the benefit of Tibetan women, the Dharma and the world. Rather than stand on a technicality and take a position that will be viewed as sexist from a modern standpoint, Tibetan bhikṣus should be able to see the great benefit that nuns can accomplish. As Ven. M. Wimalasara said to the Tibetan monks, when he attended the First Seminar of Vinaya

p. 547

Scholars Concerning the Lineage of Bhikṣuṇī Ordination in Dharamsala in 1998, 'If you have good intentions, you will find a way.' Many women in the Tibetan tradition are waiting to assess the intentions of their bhikṣu saṅgha. They expect the Tibetan monks to find a way and make a favorable decision to fulfil their wishes.

p. 548

## 傳統與繼承——中國與西藏比丘尼傳承之薪火相傳

釋恆清  
臺灣大學哲學系教授

### 提要

自佛陀在世時，佛教僧團制度中，即有比丘、比丘尼二部僧團的設立，但是西藏佛教自古至今未曾成立比丘尼僧團。當藏傳佛教在西方漸漸弘傳之際，此情形常被批評為性別歧視。

近年來，提倡建立西藏比丘尼僧團的聲浪日益高漲。最近有二次研討會分別於臺北與達蘭沙拉（Dharamsala）舉行，專門探討戒律、比丘尼制度、如何建立藏傳比丘尼僧團等問題。

本文即是深入探討這些問題，文中分成四大部份：第一部份探討戒律中有關女眾自出家至成為比丘尼的規定，和傳授比丘尼戒的過程。第二部份討論有關中國比丘尼僧團成立的經過，以及其相關的爭議性問題。第三部份比較《四分律》和《根本說一切有部律》中比丘尼戒之異同。第四部仍依據前三部份的研究結果，提出建立西藏佛教比丘尼僧團的可行性和方法。

**關鍵詞：**1.比丘尼 2.具足戒 3.受戒 4.西藏佛教 5.《四分律》 6.《根本說一切有部律》

[1] The first conference was held in November, 1997 in Taipei, Taiwan. It was sponsored by the Center for Buddhist Studies at National Taiwan University. The Dalai Lama sent Geshe Tashi Tsering to attend the conference. The other participants included Chinese bhikṣuṇīs, bhikṣus, and scholars. The discussions concentrated mainly on two topics: (1) the formation and development of the Chinese Bhikṣuṇī lineage and (2) the difference between the vinaya systems of Dharmagupta and Mūlasarvāstivāda. The second conference was held in August, 1998 in Dharamsala. It was sponsored by the Department of Religious and Cultural Affairs of the Tibetan Government in exile and included Vinaya masters from Taiwan, the Theravāda tradition and the Tibetan tradition. Among the invited speakers, there was only one bhikṣuṇī representative, apparently a very uneven ratio.

[2] The story of how Mahāprajāpatī became a nun can be found in the following sources:

(1) Pali Cullavagga X (I.B. Horner, The Books of the Discipline, Pali Text Society, London, 1975, vol.5, pp.352-356).

(2) Madhyamāgama (T.1, pp.605a-607b).

(3) Gautamī-vyākaraṇa-sūtra (T.1, pp.856a-858a).

- (4) Dharmagupta Vinaya (T.22, pp.922c-923c).
- (5) Mahāsaṃghika Vinaya (T.22, pp.471a-471b).
- (6) Mahīśāsaka Vinaya (T.22, pp.185b-186b).
- (7) Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya (T.24, pp.350b-351a).
- (8) Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī Bhikṣuṇī Sūtra (T.24, pp.945b-947a).

[3] I. B. Horner, *The Book of the Discipline*, vol.5, p.352.

[4] Mānatta means joy to the penitent resulted from confession and absolution; it is also a term for penance, or punishment.

[5] The Ssu-fen Lu, T.22, p.923a-b.

[6] There is some debate about whether or not the eight chief rules are an accurate representation of the words of the Buddha. First, the formation of the eight rules goes against the Buddha's general procedure for establishing precepts, which is, whenever a monk or nun did or said something improper, accordingly a precept was set up to prevent future occurrence. Second, there is evidence that at least some of the eight rules did not exist at the time that the bhikṣuṇī lineage was established. For example, the pācittiya rule 52 in the Pali Bhikṣuṇī Vibhaṅga says that 'Whichever nuns were to verbally abuse or revile a monk--this is an offence involving expiation.' (For the background of the formation of this rule, see Gregory Schopen, "The Suppression of Nuns and the Ritual Murder of their Special Dead in Two Buddhist Monastic Texts," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, vol.24, 1996, pp.563-592.) This rule is equivalent to the second rule of the eight chief rules. If the eight rules were proclaimed before the establishment of the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha, this pācittiya rule would not have to be proclaimed again.

[7] Ssu-fen Lu (*Dharmagupta Vinaya*), T.22, p.925a.

[8] For a detailed discussion of the need for consent of parents or husband, see I.B. Horner, *Women in Primitive Buddhism*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, pp.174-184. The Pali Vinaya states, "Let no son, almsman, receive the pabbajjā ordination without his father's and his mother's consent. He who confers the pabbajjā ordination [on a son without that permission] is guilty of a dukkata offence." (I. B. Horner, *Women in Primitive Buddhism*, p.149). The Ssu-fen Lu also states, "If a bhikṣuṇī ordains a woman without first receiving the permission of her guardian, at that instant, her act is to be

considered a saṅghāvaśeṣa offense.” (T.22, p.519b.) The “guardian” refers to the parents, husband, mother-in-law, father-in-law or uncles. According to the Therīgāthā, it seems that this rule was closely followed during the Buddha's time. However, nowadays in Taiwan, where there is a large number of bhikṣuṇīs, this rule is not very strictly observed. In the case of a woman who cannot get consent from her parents or husband, it is argued that an adult woman has a legal right to act on her own behalf and make her own decision without anybody's consent.

[9] Tan-wu-te lu-pu tza che-mo (The Karma of the Dharmagupta Vinaya), T.22, pp.1047c- 1048a.

[10] Ssu-fen Lu, T.22, pp.810c-p.811a. The Mahāsaṅghika Vinaya specifies that a “crow-chasing śrāmaṇera” is between the age of seven to thirteen (T.22, p.461b).

[11] Akira Hirakawa, Monastic Discipline for Buddhist Nuns, Kashhi Prasad Jayasawal Research Institute: Patna, 1982, p.299.

[12] Ssu-fen Lu, T.22, p.756a-b.

[13] Shih-sung Lu, T.23, p.326a.

[14] T.22, p.1037c. Karma Lekshe Tsomo, Sisters in Solitude, Sri Satguru Publication: Delhi, 1997, p.54.

[15] For a discussion of the śikṣamāṇā precepts in the various Vinaya traditions, see Hirakawa, Monastic Discipline for the Buddhist Nuns, pp.53-54.

[16] T.22, p.924b-c.

[17] T.23, p.1005a.

[18] T.22, p.1048a.

[19] Karma means religious action, service or performance; it refers to the meeting of the monks or nuns for the purpose of ordination, confession, or expulsion of the unrepentant.(A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms, compiled by William Soothill, Buddhist Culture Service, Fukuangshan, Taiwan, p.442.)

[20] T.22, p.1048b.

[21] Ibid.

[22] T.22, p.1048c.

[23] According to the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, there should be twelve Bhikṣuṇī precept masters.

[24] I.B. Horner, The Book of the Discipline, vol.5, p.375.

[25] Hirakawa, p.60-62.

[26] T. 22, p.1048c.

[27] T.24, p.461c-462a. The questions include: (1) whether the candidate has received permission from her parents or husband; (2) whether she has completed the two year study of the precepts; (3) whether she has committed a serious offense (such as killing her parents); (4) whether she has a upādhyayinī; (5) whether she is a woman; (6) and whether she has diseases such as leprosy, scabies, tuberculosis, mental disease, etc.

[28] A bhikṣuṇī should have three robes (kaṣāya): 1. Saṅghāṭī (assembly robe), 2. Uttarāsaṅgha (upper robe), and 3. Antaravāsaka (vest or shirt).

[29] T.22, p.1049a.

[30] T.22, p.1049b.

[31] In the Mahīśāsakā and Dharmgupta Vinayas, four niśrayas are mentioned, the other Vinayas mention only three.

[32] In the Māhasaṅghika, Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinayas, the three niśrayas are explained before taking the upasaṃpadā to make sure that the candidate understands the austere life she will have to lead. However, in the Dharmagupta and the Pali Vinaya, the niśrayas are explained after the upasaṃpadā.

[33] Nowadays in both Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist traditions, it is a common practice for the bhikṣus to ordain laywomen and confer the śrāmaṇerikā vows. However, this practice is not in accord with the Vinaya.

[34] Horner, p. 144.

[35] The so-called “three-platform ordination” includes the śrāmaṇerkā and śikṣamāṇāṇa, upasaṃpadā (bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī), and bodhisattva ordinations. Usually it takes one month for all the procedures.

[36] According to all the Vinaya traditions, women should take the pravrajyā, śrāmaṇerikā, śikṣamāṇā, and bhikṣuṇī ordinations from the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha. Therefore, strictly speaking, a bhikṣu should not ordain a woman as his disciple. However, the ordination of female disciples by bhikṣus is a very common practice in Taiwanese and Tibetan Buddhism.

[37] The Biographies of Bhikṣuṇīs (Pi-ch'iu-ni chuan), compiled in 516 A.D. by the monk Pao-ch'ang, record the lives of sixty-five eminent bhikṣuṇīs. For the English translation of this text, see Kathryn Ann Tsai, *Lives of the Nuns*, University of Hawai Press, 1994.

[38] T.50, p.934c.

[39] During Ching-chien's time, the Dharmagupta Karman, which describes the karma procedures for the ordination of bhikṣuṇīs, had already been translated, but it was probably not available in south China. The Sarvāstivāda Vinaya was the first complete version of the Vinaya to be translated and it was not completed until 404 A.D. This is why Fa-shih said that the “precepts” were incomplete.

[40] T.50, p.934c.

[41] An other name for the Chieh-yin-yuan-ching is Pi-na-yeh (Vinaya), T.24. pp.851b-899c.

[42] The Vinaya texts that Guṇavarman translated include the Hsa-hsin, the Karman of the Dharmagupta Vinaya, the Brief Treatise on the Five Precepts of the Upāsaka, and the Twenty-two Precepts of the Upāsaka, etc. (T.50, p.340a).

[43] T.50, p.341b and T.50, pp.342b.

[44] Kathryn A. Tsai, tr., *Lives of the Nuns*, p. 53.



[45] There is another record of the arrival of the bhikṣuṇīs from India in the Pi-ch'iu-ni Shou-chieh Lu (The Record of the Bhikṣuṇīs' Taking Precepts). This text says, “During the end of Han Dynasty and the beginning of Wei Dynasty (around 220 A.D.) two bhikṣuṇīs from eastern India came to [the Capital] Chang-an. They asked the Chinese nuns from whom they had received the precepts. They replied that they had only taken the five and ten precepts from the bhikṣu saṅgha. These two Indian bhikṣuṇīs sighed and said that the nuns of the borderland (i.e., Chinese nuns) were not fully ordained. They then returned to their country and solicited fifteen bhikṣuṇīs to come to China to administer the bhikṣuṇī ordination; of these bhikṣuṇīs three died in the snow mountains and two died from falling into dark gorges. Only ten of them survived and reached China. Thereupon many Chinese nuns went to the capital city to receive the full ordination. Later these Indian bhikṣuṇīs went to the area of Wu (south of Yangtze River) and gave ordination to Chinese nuns there, too.” (Hsu Tsang Ching, vol.60, p.708b.) This account is not found anywhere except the Pi-ch'iu-ni Shou-chieh Lu by Hung-tsang. Since this text was not written until the seventeenth century, its authenticity is dubious.

[46] Kathryn A. Tsai, p.54; T.50, p.939c.

[47] Ibid.

[48] T.50, p.341b.

[49] For a bhikṣuṇī to be qualified to act as a preceptor she must have been a fully ordained as a bhikṣuṇī for more than twelve years.

[50] There should be ten bhikṣuṇīs (the three preceptors and three witnesses) to confer bhikṣuṇī ordination.

[51] T.50, p.341b.

[52] In the biography of the nun Pao-hsien, the year given for this ordination is 434 C.E.

[53] Manji Zokuzo Kyo (Hsu Tsang Ching), Pai-ma Publisher, Taipei, vol.64, p.454.

[54] The nun Hui-kuo asked Guṇavarman, “All the Buddhist nuns here in China who earlier received the obligation to keep the rules did not receive according to the fundamentals of the rituals. They had as their eminent precedent the Buddha's step-mother, Mahāprajāpatī. But those first Chinese nuns did not know, and neither do I, whether there is any difference [between Mahāprajāpatī's situation and that of the nuns who came after her].” Guṇavarman replied, “There is no difference.” Hui-kuo continued, “According to the literature of the monastic regulations that I have read, the teacher who administers the rules and the obligation to follow them has committed an offense by permitting women to receive the rules from the Assembly of Monks only. [Therefore, how can there be no difference?” ] (Kathryn A. Tsai, *Lives of the Nuns*, p.37; T.50, p.937b.)

[55] T.50, p. 937b.

[56] Dao-hai, “Discussion of Bhikṣuṇī Ordination and its Lineage in China: Based on Scriptures of Chinese Vinaya and Historical facts,” paper delivered in the 1st Seminar of Vinaya Scholars Concerning the Lineage of Bhikṣuṇī Ordination, Dharamsala, 3-5 August, 1998, p.18

[57] The “precept age” refers to the number of years a monk or nun has been fully ordained as a bhikṣu or bhikṣuṇī.

[58] T.49, p.344c.

[59] Kathryn A. Tsai, *Lives of the Nuns*, p.17.

[60] For a detailed study of bhikṣuṇīs in T'ang Dynasty, see Yu-chen Lee, *T'ang-Tai Te Pi-chiu-ni (Bhikṣuṇīs in the T'ang)*, Hsieh-shen Publisher, 1989.

[61] In almost every important dynasty, the biographies of eminent monks were compiled, but this was not the case with regard to bhikṣuṇīs.

[62] Heng-ching Shih, “Chinese Bhikṣuṇīs in the Ch'an Tradition,” *Philosopher's Review*, vol.15, 1992, pp.181-207.

[63] This persecution did not last very long. Although hundreds of thousands of monks and nuns were forced to return to lay life, still many escaped from the persecution. After Emperor Hsuan-Tsang (846~859 A.D.),

Wu-tsung's successor, ascended the throne he ordered that state ordination platforms be built to re-ordain the monks and nuns forced to return to lay status. Therefore, despite this devastating persecution, neither the bhikṣu nor the bhikṣuṇī lineage was broken.

[64] T.49. p.465c.

[65] T.54, p.252a.

[66] Ibid.

[67] T.54, p.238c.

[68] Dao-hai, “Discussion of Bhikṣuṇī Ordination and Its Lineage in China: Based on Scriptures of Chinese Vinaya and Historical Facts,” p.5.

[69] T.49, p.463a.

[70] T.49, p.404a.

[71] For a partial translation of the Fo-tsu tung-chi, see Jan Yun-hua, A Chronicle of Buddhism in China 581~960 A.D., Viśva-Bharati:Calcutta, 1966.

[72] T.49, p.396b.

[73] Hsu-tsan Ching, vol.107, p.94.

[74] Ibid., p.115.

[75] Ibid., p.93.

[76] Hung-yi, Lu-hsueh Yao-lueh, in Hung-yi Ta-shih Fa-chi, vol.3, p.1531.

[77] Among the Bhikṣuṇī ordinations held in Taiwan in recent years, a few of them were conferred by both saṅghas, while the others were by the bhikṣu saṅgha only.

[78] Karma Lekshe Tsomo, Sisters in Solitude, p.136.

[79] Ibid., p.140.

[80] Kabilsingh, p.74.

[81] Kabilsingh, pp.94-96.

[82] T.22, pp.1037b-1038a; T.24, p.514-515a.

[83] T.22, pp.754c-755a; Sacred Books of the Buddhists, vol.20, p.385.

[84] In the Tibetan translation of the Mūlasarvāstivādin Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣā, there are 113 śaikṣa rules. (Karma Lekshe Tsomo, Sisters in Solitude, pp.120-127.)

[85] Shih Hui-min, “chung-tu Pi-ch'iu-ni chuan-ch'eng yu Tsi-tsang pi-ch'iu-ni seng-tuan chih ch'ung-chien,” the Journal of the Center for Buddhist Studies, National Taiwan University, vol. 3, 1998, p.12.

[86] W. Pachow, “A Comparative Study of the Prātimokṣa,” In Sino-Indian Studies, Vol. IV, part 2, ed., P.C. Bagchi, Shantiniketan, India, 1955, p.69.

[87] Before the Buddha entered parinirvāṇa, he told Ānanda that “the lesser and minor rules may be abolished.” (I.B. Horner, the Book of the Discipline, vol.5, p.398.)

[88] Due to political tensions between Communist China and Tibet, it is unlikely, though not impossible that both sides will consider cooperating on this religious issue. Thus, the bhikṣuṇīs in Taiwan are probably the best choice for the Tibetan tradition. Besides, the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha in Taiwan is now very strong and vital.

[89] Tibetan bhikṣus can also choose to confer the full ordination only once, and wait for twelve years until the Tibetan bhikṣuṇīs become qualified to conduct the dual ordination in conjunction with Tibetan bhikṣus.

[90] The same logic can apply to the śrāmaṇerikā and śikṣamāṇā ordinations. Until Tibetan bhikṣuṇīs are available, the bhikṣu saṅgha can legitimately give the ordinations to Tibetan nuns.