A Nascent Bhikkhunī Sangha in North-east Thailand

A lecture prepared for the E-learning Course on Asian Buddhist Women
hosted by the Numata Center for Buddhist Studies
and the Women in Buddhism Study Initiative, the University of Hamburg

Ayako ITOH
5th May 2016
Nirodharam : Uposatha hall
Assumptions about the emergence of bhikkhunī in Thailand

1. Women becoming bhikkhunī are western minded and the movement is a western imposition.

2. Thai monks are against women becoming bhikkhunī in Thailand.

3. Women becoming bhikkhunī want to have higher status in Buddhist community.
Location of Nirodharam
Chomthong district, Chiang Mai
Profile of early ordained members in Nirodharam

As of October 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Province of Origin</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years Under robes</th>
<th>Secular Educational Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhikkhunī</td>
<td>Nanthayani</td>
<td>Chiang Mai (Northern)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>University degree in science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhikkhunī</td>
<td>Panyawari</td>
<td>Chiang Rai (Northern)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Elementary School 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhikkhunī</td>
<td>Satthasiri</td>
<td>Chiang Mai (Northern)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>University degree in Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhikkhunī</td>
<td>Pannaphari</td>
<td>Bangkok (Center)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>University degree in Medical Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhikkhunī</td>
<td>Warathinna</td>
<td>Chiang Mai (Northern)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>University degree in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samañeri</td>
<td>Sunyata</td>
<td>Tak (Northern)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Elementary School 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samañeri</td>
<td>Thirayani</td>
<td>Bangkok (Center)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Elementary School 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samañeri</td>
<td>Ratanayani</td>
<td>Lampang (Northern)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>University degree in Business Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samañeri</td>
<td>Matchima</td>
<td>Lampang (Northern)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Elementary School 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samañeri</td>
<td>Silasupatra</td>
<td>Nakhon Rachasima (Northeast)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Jr. High School 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are mae chi who remained as mae chi and there are other who join the group only during the rain retreat.
Five bhikkhunī of Nirodharam
Timeline of *upasampadā and pabbajjā*

- *Pabbajjā in Sri Lanka, 13 mae chi became sāmaṇerī*
- *Pabbajjā in Chiang Mai, 12 mae chi became sāmaṇerī*
- *Pabbajjā in Chiang Mai, 7 mae chi became sāmaṇerī*

- 2006
- 2008/2
- 2008/4
- 2008/10

*Upasampadā and pabbajjā in Sri Lanka, 5 sāmaṇerī became bhikkhunī*
*2 mae chi became sāmaṇerī*
Nuns’ monastic cell (kudi) in Nirodharam
The Daily Schedule at Nirodharam

3:30 am The wake up bell rings.
4:00-5:00 am Walking or sitting meditation in the Sala (hall).
5:00-5:30 am Listen to a Dhamma talk.
5:30-6:00 am Morning chanting.
6:00-8:00 am Alms round / sweeping leaves/ cleaning the monastery.
8:00-9:00 am Contemplation on food and eating together.

9:00am-1:30 pm Time for solitude, personal development of mindfulness and wisdom.
1:30-4:00 pm Walking or sitting meditation in the Sala.
4:00-6:00 pm Washing the body; doing personal chores.
6:00-7:30 pm Walking or sitting meditation in the Sala.
7:30-8:00 pm Evening Chanting.
8:00-9:00 pm Listen to Dhamma talk.
9:00-10:00 pm Solitude time. Practice further or go to bed mindfully.
Community of Nirodharam (Feb. 2008)

Pabbajjā at Sutthachit branch, Chiang Mai, Feb. 2008
Bhikkhuni Nandañāṭī
Luang Pho Thong at Wat Chomthong
Khru Ba Ae : Phra Khru Palatsongsawat Panyawachiro
Pavāraṇā ceremony held in Uposatha hall in Wat Chomthong
During the *Pavāraṇā* ceremony held in Uposatha hall
The Bhikkhunī-vibhanga section in Vinaya, defines bhikkhunī as:

She is a nun [bhikkhunī] because she is a beggar for alms, she is a nun because she submits to walking for alms, she is a nun because she is one who wears the patch-work robes, she is a nun by the designation (of others), a nun because of her acknowledgement, a nun (to whom it was) said, “Come, nun”, a nun is one ordained by the three goings to a refuge, a nun is an adept, a nun is ordained by both complete Orders by means of a (formal) act at which the motion is put and followed by three proclamations, irreversible and fit to stand.

In this way is this nun one who is ordained by both complete Orders by means of a (formal) act at which the motion was put and followed by three proclamations, irreversible, fit to stand, and this is how nun is to be understood in this case (Horner, 1942: 161).
Daily alms round
A painting of then Mae chi Bhikkhuni Nandañāṇī on the wall of local monastery
Thank you for listening!