

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

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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

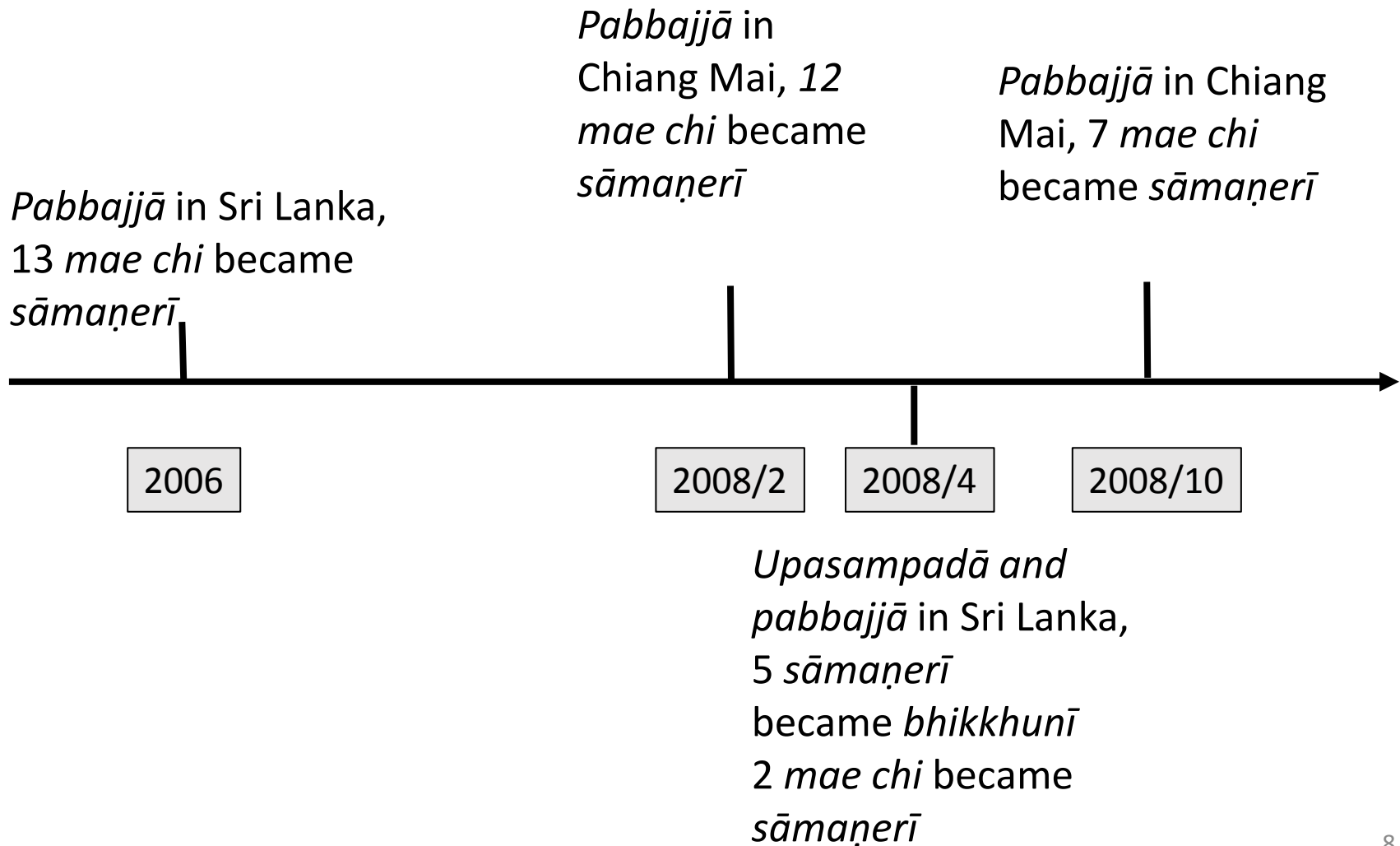
	Title	Name	Province of Origin	Age	Years Under robes	Secular Educational Background
1	Bhikkhunī	Nanthayani (head nun)	Chiang Mai (Northern)	53	27	University degree in science
2	Bhikkhunī	Panyawari	Chiang Rai (Northern)	57	26	Elementary School 4
3	Bhikkhunī	Satthasiri	Chiang Mai (Northern)	49	11	University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

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*



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 Nandañāṇī



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



Definition of *bhikkhunī* from Pali Canon

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 !

