

Autonomy of the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha

Reflection on the Validity of Bhikkhunī Ordination in the Modern Theravāda World

INTRODUCTION

Within Theravāda the Bhikkhunī Question remains unresolved. Since the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha's apparent extinction the dispute regarding its re-establishment within Theravāda has been laborious, heated, and inconclusive.

In July 2007 the 1st International Congress was convened to discuss issues pertaining to the role of women in the contemporary Buddhist world. Over three days of discussion there emerged two core arguments justifying the legality of Bhikkhunī ordinations which I will summarise in brief:

- A)** The Bhikkhu Saṅgha (the Community of monks) can ordain women without the presence of the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha. This argument is based on an allowance by Lord Buddha.
- B)** Historical evidence suggests that Dharmagaptaka Bhikkunīs are also descended from the Theravāda lineage and so bhikkhunī ordinations are valid. This is the argument based on history.

Whilst reflecting on the ongoing bhikkhunī question a Vinaya point came to mind which, as far as I am aware, has not been raised before. I would like to present this as a third argument:

- C)** The Bhikkhu Saṅgha and the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha are two legally separate entities and subsequently one cannot exert its will on the other. It follows, therefore, that the Bhikkhu Saṅgha cannot determine the legality of the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha. The legality of bhikkhunī ordination is a choice to be made *by* bhikkhunīs, not *for* bhikkhunīs. This is the argument based on Vinaya.

What will follow are critical briefs of the first two arguments and the case for a third way, an alternative perspective on the matter. It is my hope that in doing so this Vinaya perspective may be recognised and implemented moving forward.

A) Single ordination by bhikkhus

This argument is based on Buddha's allowance, “*Monks, I allow bhikkhus to give upasampada to nuns.*” (Cv X.2.1)¹

There is also passage in Cv X.17.2 which allows bhikkhus to give full ordination to a candidate who has already been given full ordination by the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha: “*Monks. I prescribe the higher ordination in the community of bhikkhus for one who has been highly ordained on one side and has cleared herself in the community of nuns.*”

It is Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro's and Phra Payutto's argument² that Cv X.17 came after Cv X.2; the passage from Cv X.17 overrides the Cv X.2 and prevents bhikkhus from granting ordination to women. However, there is also an argument from Bhikkhu Bodhi and Bhikkhu Anālayo,³ that both passages can be valid: if the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha is existing, then the rules from Cv X.17 should be followed – meaning that there should be dual-ordination: firstly by the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha, and then by the Bhikkhu Saṅgha. In the situation when Bhikkhunī Saṅgha does not exist any more and no further ordination is possible by them, then the passage from Cv X.2 becomes relevant – that means that only Bhikkhus can grant ordination to women.

Those two arguments divide well-known Theravāda scholars and their followers. Therefore a conclusion remains elusive.

B) Collaboration with the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha from Mahāyāna

The historical argument is generally popular on but on inspection the complex nature of the schismatic history of Buddhist monastic traditions leaves it open to many criticisms and thus is unlikely to lead to resolution. I will summarise the basic argument.

Dharmaguptaka is a Śrāvakayāna (Mahāyāna) school of Northern India which shares common ancestry with Theravāda as they both have their roots in what was the Vibhajjavada. They share identical Pāṭimokkha (the list of rules) and Upasampāda (the full ordination) procedures, and have a near identical Vinaya or Monastic Code (with minor differences regarding etiquette when near stupas).

Dharmaguptaka Vinaya appears to have originated in north-western India around the 1st century CE. They are one of three surviving Vinaya lineages, along with Theravāda, Mūlasarvāstivāda, and Dharmaguptaka, the latter of which is the only surviving monastic bhikkhunī order. However, Chinese sources record that before the Sri Lankan (Theravāda) Bhikkhunī order came to the end, a group of Sri Lankan bhikkhunīs transmitted the ordination lineage to China in 433 CE. In the beginning of the eight century the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya appears to have been imposed upon by the Emperor of the time on all monasteries in China. From that period onwards we have all bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs in China following Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, possibly at the emperor's prerogative. Therefore, it is argued that the Dharmaguptaka lineage is, in essence Theravada, despite being disguised as Dharmaguptaka Vinaya. Consensus seems to be emerging among scholars that the historical record validates the claim that Bhikkhunī ordinations are in line with Vinaya.⁴

The historical claims for this argument are complex and are not beyond doubt. Nobody can ensure that there aren't undiscovered facts to contradict this argument. We may discover that the emperor of China ordered all the bhikkhunīs who took Theravāda ordination should be re-ordained in Dharmaguptaka. Or perhaps it might be discovered that there was some schism between Dharmaguptaka and Theravāda.

It appears that the argument from a purely fact-based historical account will remain a weak position due to its speculative nature.

C) Argument based on Vinaya

In this part I will not try to present conclusions about what passage actually comes first and which second in the Vinaya, nor speculate what happened in the past with all lineages, but rather about what should have happened according to the principles of the Vinaya.

I would like to make a case based on Vinaya. As the ethical code laid down by Buddha, according to Dhamma, it explains 'what *might* have happened' and 'what *ought* to have happened' in various situations. If one takes the Vinaya as a guide for best practise rather than as a document of historical truisms, as has mistakenly been the case throughout history, then the clouds of confusion surrounding the Bhikkhunī question may begin to dissipate. With the Vinaya as our guide, we can stop basing arguments on shaky speculative and historical grounds, on what *may* have happened, and instead work with the Vinaya as a means to see what *should* happen. And what should happen, if we are to be true to the Vinaya?

1. Separation between Saṅghas

In order to answer this question, we must first understand how the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhunī Saṅghas are purposefully meant to be distinct, self-governing entities with their own respective *saṅgha-kammas* (Community transactions).

The variety of today's Buddhist monastic traditions came into existence through historical disagreements about Dhamma-Vinaya and for other reasons such as geographical distance, all leading to schism (formally recognised or not). Here I refer you to the intentional separation of bhikkhus; for example, some lineages were created when Communities migrated to different parts of India and other parts of Asia and due to the geographical distance links were severed over time. In some cases even separate legal community acts (*saṅgha-kamma*) were undertaken, as when the Mahāsāṃghikas split off from the Theravādins and established their own *saṅgha-kamma*. But, we must remember that these historical schisms are the sole doings of the Bhikkhu Saṅgha; only Bhikkhus should have been directly effected. If legal acts within the Bhikkhu Saṅgha had ever been carried out on behalf of the bhikkhunīs, then the bhikkhus would fall into an offence of wrong-doing (*dukkata*).

Bhikkhunīs should not be and have not been involved with the *bhikkhu-saṅgha-kamma*, and bhikkhus should not be involved with the *bhikkhunī-saṅgha-kamma*, as to do so constitutes wrong-doing. We can assume that the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha are a separate institution that has not suffered schisms associated with the Bhikkhus. According to the Vinaya, bhikkhunīs can not take part in official *bhikkhu-saṅgha-kamma* because they are a separate entity with their own transaction. It is also unlikely that after the Buddha's *paranibbāna* the bhikkhunīs played any significant role in the bhikkhus' disputes or in any later formal decisions. Which brings us back to the point that the various schisms associated with the Bhikkhu Saṅgha are not as applicable to Bhikkhunīs as a whole.

My understanding is that the present forms of Theravāda, with its many divisions (*nikāyas* and *saṃvāsas*), are traditions of bhikkhus alone; the bhikkhunī individuals who have joined, did of their own volition.⁵ Thus in an alternative time-line where Vinaya principles prevailed over all other factors, the bhikkhunīs could have had a long-standing tradition of their own.⁶

2. Autonomy of bhikkhunīs

The following passages from the Khandaka Vinaya support my argument for a clear distinction between Saṅghas.

Firstly, their respective Pāṭimokkhas are recited separately. In Bhikkhu Vinaya it is said: “*The Pāṭimokkha should not be recited with a bhikkhunī*” (Mv II.36.1). “*Whose protest in the midst of the Community does not carry weight? The protest of a bhikkhunī*” (Mv IX.4.7). And the same applies when bhikkhunīs recite the Pāṭimokkha, bhikkhus should not be present. Originally the Buddha allowed bhikkhus to recite the Pāṭimokkha to the bhikkhunīs, as well as to carry out a formal act (*kamma*) for nuns. It was only when laypeople criticized the bhikkhus for such actions that the Buddha announced that bhikkhus should not recite the Pāṭimokkha to the bhikkhunīs, and that the Pāṭimokkha to be recited to bhikkhunīs by a bhikkhunī. (See Cv X.6.1.)

Secondly, *garubhanda* (heavy or expensive goods) cannot be owned by both Saṅghas or given from one Saṅgha to the other. *Garubhanda* property should be always designated to one Saṅgha alone, though *saṅgha garubhanda* could be loaned to the other temporarily (Cv X.16.1). The following example also confirms the separation of ownership:

“Monks, if a nun, as she is passing away, should speak thus, 'After I am gone, let my requisites be for the Order,' in that case the Order of monks is not the owner, but they are for the Order of nuns.... Monks, if a monk as he is passing away, should speak thus, ... the Order of nuns is not the owner, but they are for the Order of monks.” (Cv X.11)⁷

Thirdly, according to the Vinaya, the Buddha gave permission to the bhikkhunīs to carry out formal acts independently of the bhikkhus: “*Monks, a (formal) act on behalf of nuns should not be carried out by monks. Whoever should (so) carry one out, there is an offence of wrong-doing.*” (Cv X.6.3)

Originally bhikkhus were allowed to settle bhikkhunīs' legal questions but he later rescinded this ruling prohibiting: “*the carrying out by monks of nuns' (formal) acts, giving it into the charge of nuns to carry out nuns' (formal) acts by nuns.*” (Cv X.7)

Bhikkhus are only allowed to *explain* to bhikkhunīs how the Pāṭimokkha should be recited, how an offence should be confessed and acknowledged, and how Saṅgha acts should be carried out. They may also teach the discipline to new bhikkhunīs when there is no knowledgeable bhikkhunī around (*cf.* Cv X.6).

Another highly important reference indicating the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha as an independent decision making body comes from Buddha's advice given at Kosambi. In the records of Mv X.5, the Kosambi monks were making disputes between the Saṅghas. These quarrelsome bhikkhus were coming to Sāvattihī and so each of the great disciples of the Buddha asked how they should conduct themselves with such disturbing fellows. To the great disciples the Buddha said, “*As Dhamma is, so must you stand,*” and explained the eighteen points by which to know what is Dhamma and what is non-Dhamma (see the Mv X.5.4).⁸

Then Mahāpajāpatī Gotami (bhikkhunī), Anāthapiṇḍika (the great layman disciple) and Visākhā (the great laywoman disciple) asked the same question to the Buddha in succession but, as we will see below, they were given different answers. These answers contributed to the establishment of a *modus operandi* for dealing with divisions and disagreements that Bhikkhu-Saṅgha as well as leading Upāsakas/Upāsikās were to follow. In relation to a Bhikkhu Saṅgha of more than one valid *saṃvasa*, the Buddha said to the bhikkhunī Mahāpajāpatī Gotami:

“Well then, do you, Gotami, hear Dhamma on both sides; having heard Dhamma on both sides, choose the views and the approval and the persuasion and the creed of those monks who are there speakers of Dhamma, and whatever is to be desired by the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha from the Bhikkhu

Saṅgha, all that should be desired only from one who speaks Dhamma.”

This passage illustrates that the Buddha places the responsibility squarely into the hands of the bhikkhunīs themselves to choose with whom they will affiliate and receive instructive support, based on Dhamma. The judgement they made is in accordance with their perception of the views and behaviours of the bhikkhus, with reference to the eighteen points offered by the Buddha to discern what is Dhamma and what is non-Dhamma. It is not a matter for the bhikkhus to push their values on to nuns, but a matter for the bhikkhunīs to decide for themselves. They (bhikkhunīs) can make even a choice which group or *saṃvasa* in relation to the bhikkhus want to follow.

3. Bhikkhus' remaining roles

The separation between bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs is not one of complete isolation. There are Vinaya rules regarding maintaining relations between *samaṇas* (which includes both, bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs) including: how to maintain a healthy distance, and yet relate harmoniously; how to resolve disputes; and how to handle times of *ovāda* (exhortation), of which bhikkhus are required to give fortnightly.⁹

Contact is intended to be limited and formal, and, as the above passages show, there is clear separation in most corporate decision making. Despite the purposeful separation between Saṅghas, there does seem to be some allowances regarding bhikkhu involvement in Bhikkhunī procedures, such as giving *ovāda* on a fortnightly basis. But that is only when bhikkhunīs invite the respected and knowledgeable senior bhikkhu (of twenty years of standing or more) to do so.

However, the Bhikkhunī order did not (and does not) take part in the legal actions (*saṅghakamma*) of the Bhikkhu Saṅgha and consequently this means that there is—according to the Vinaya—there are no fixed Dharmaguptaka or Theravāda lineages for the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha. This is crucial as it means that it is besides the point for the Theravāda Bhikkhu Saṅgha to decide if Dharmaguptaka Bhikkhunī ordination is or is not recognized by the Theravāda. It is up to the bhikkhunīs to choose which school to follow, and they have the right to be called Theravāda if that is their wish to be designated as such. Moreover, according to the Vinaya, Saṅgha acts or decisions are legal only when individuals come together in one designated place (*sīmā*); and again, it is up to the bhikkhunīs in their determined boundary to come to a consensus as to how much they wish to follow the decisions of local or non-local bhikkhus; their choice may be variable and flexible according to time, place and circumstances.

I believe that the above view gives greater freedom to prospective renunciant women to judge their situation independently, without the intercession of the bhikkhus in the matter, should they wish to avoid it. Vinaya decisions for bhikkhunīs should be made by nuns themselves. *There is no justifications for bhikkhus under the Vinaya to impose any interpretation or practice on the bhikkhunīs.* As was said above the bhikkhus' role is to educate and support when it is needed, and to remain silent when it is not.

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There is some concern that there is no option for women to be ordained if they do not get recognition from the bhikkhus. It is true according to the Vinaya that bhikkhus have to participate in Bhikkhunī ordinations, and that it is up to the bhikkhus themselves to make the decision whether to acknowledge the legitimacy of these ordinations or not. But from my understanding while recognition is of course important for the Saṅgha cohesion, it does not need to be made from the

whole international bhikkhu Saṅgha for it to be valid. In a private letter Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi remarked:

“The monastic and government councils can make their declarations, but if the women recognize one another as bhikkhunīs, and a sufficient number of bhikkhus support them (how many?), and the lay community (at least substantial numbers) treat them as bhikkhunīs, then for all practical purposes, *they are* bhikkhunīs. It seems there is no 'divine authority' that one can ask to decide their status.”

Nothing can prevent a woman from ordaining as a bhikkhunī if they find a Bhikkhunī Saṅgha and bhikkhus who are prepared to recognise them. Yet, certain countries have centralized Saṅgha councils which make major decisions for all of the bhikkhus and nuns (*Mae ji* in Thailand, *dasa sil mata* in Sri Lanka, *thilashin* in Myanmar, *siladhara* in England); in these countries the councils still do not recognize the validity of Bhikkhunī ordination. In Myanmar bhikkhunīs are not tolerated; in Thailand there are already Thai women who have taken Bhikkhunī ordination and have formed their own monasteries; in Sri Lanka a large number of sympathetic bhikkhus have recognized bhikkhunīs as legitimately ordained and have participated in ordinations of women.¹⁰

Such governance need not apply to the West since there is nothing in the Vinaya to determine that the authority of centralized hierarchy covers the Saṅgha as a single, unified, homogeneous group. Vinaya texts always speak simply of “the Saṅgha,” and the Saṅgha would mean here the group of local bhikkhus alone who still follow the main guide, that is Dhamma-Vinaya as it is presently available to us in Suttas-Piṭaka and Vinaya-Piṭaka.¹¹

If legal acts within the Bhikkhu Saṅgha had ever been carried out on behalf of the bhikkhunīs, the bhikkhus would fall into an offence of wrong-doing (*dukkata*); this applies even to bhikkhus who are living in the same district as bhikkhunīs, not to mention the possibility of interference from another district or even from another continent. It is Dhamma-Vinaya that is governing the Saṅgha, and not institutions based on worldly ideas. And the same applies for the holding of traditions: there are traditions and they do have a major place within our social life, but when we have to make a major decision or resolve disputes in the Saṅgha, the tradition must take second place to the Dhamma-Vinaya.

CONCLUSION

My effort here is to point out that according to the Vinaya there should be certain distinctions between the Bhikkhu and the Bhikkhunī Saṅghas, that bhikkhus cannot hold the whole responsibility in matters concerning bhikkhunīs, and that Bhikkhunī issues such as ordination lineage should be dealt with first internally within the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha; and if and when asked, the local Bhikkhu Saṅgha may offer support and guidance, following (limited) obligations to the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha according to Vinaya procedure. Because of these distinctions, *Bhikkhunī ordination has its own legal lineage and its own freedom.*

This heated and contentious debate is too complex to be settled by a pronouncement that will satisfy everyone. As soon as one person offers a solution to the problem—whether in a way that permits or disqualifies Bhikkhunī ordination—a dozen others will offer their refutations.

This is purely a Vinaya argument, but it can also appeal to the cause of equity amongst the genders, which is a key aspect of contemporary western thought – thus a bridge between Vinaya principles and modernity can be made whilst compromising neither. For the mutual benefit of the Saṅghas and the laity, particularly in the west, I hope that this will support peace and harmony in our communities.

May we follow Dhamma-Vinaya, and may Dhamma-Vinaya lead us in the right direction for the sake of freedom from this great mass of suffering.

I alone am responsible for the views expressed in this paper and they are not put forward as representing the opinion of any body of people.

Bhikkhu Hiriko

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Abbreviations

Mv - *Mahāvagga*

Cv - *Culavagga*

MN - *Majjhima Nikāya*

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- 1 In Mv III.23 and 26 we find the injunction to bhikkhus, even in the midst of their *vassa* period (monsoon season retreat), to make the effort to travel away for up to seven days for the Bhikkhunī ordination of a woman who is *sikkhamanā* (female probationer) or *sāmaṇerī* (female novice). Additionally, it is stated that the bhikkhus should not wait till the end of the *vassa* to ordain qualified persons desirous of the ordination, such that they died having missed the precious opportunity. This holds true for both bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs. It is also mentioned that if a bhikkhunī is ordained by the Bhikkhu Saṅgha, she is fully ordained as a bhikkhunī.
 - 2 Bhikkhu Anālayo, *The Controversy on Bhikkhunī Ordination*, Gotami Vihari Society, 2014, pp. 6-7.
 - 3 *Ibid.* pp. 8-14.
 - 4 Many books and articles on such research have been written. If you want to get a general overview you can read more studies as listed under References.
 - 5 That there were, according to certain Chinese and Sanskrit texts, bhikkhunīs linked to these different schools may cause one to doubt whether the bhikkhunīs were completely outside of the schisms that occurred within the Bhikkhu Saṅgha. I have not researched the texts and I am not informed of their content in detail; however, there are no records that indicate that bhikkhunīs were the instigators of the schisms and divisions, and may have been freer to move from one school to another, even if they split from other schools inside of the Bhikkhu Saṅgha. Even if schisms would apply also to bhikkhunīs, they could potentially be resolved by joint harmonious Pāṭimokkha recitation; thus, there is no irresolvable issue. (See Cv IV.14.3-4 and *Buddhist Monastic Code II*, by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu Ch. 21, pp. 428-9 and note 3. where it is mentioned that before Perth ordination did, in fact, carry out the 'unified Pāṭimokkha'.)
 - 6 C.W. Nicholas in *Brāhmī Inscriptions, Manuscript deposited at the University Library* (Peradeniya, 1965, Vol.V, p.77) writes that what could be gleaned from Sri Lankan inscriptions, like Asvādduma, is not merely that there were nuns at these localities, but even that the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha “had been formally established, and, despite their dispersed location, these nuns would have considered themselves to be members of a single and distinct community with its own tradition.” (R.A.L.H. Gunawardana, *Subtile Silks of Ferrous Firmness; Buddhist Nuns in Ancient and Early Medieval Sri Lanka and their Role in the Propagation of Buddhism*: manuscript, p.3)
 - 7 All translations (with very minor alterations) are from I.B. Horner (*Book of Discipline*, Parts 4 and 5: Pali Text Society, 1982 and 1988).
 - 8 “Now, Sāriputta, a speaker of non-dhamma is to be known by eighteen points: In such a case, Sāriputta, a monk explains non-dhamma as dhamma, he explains dhamma as non-dhamma; he explains non-discipline as discipline, he explains discipline as non-discipline; he explains what was not spoken, not uttered by the Tathāgata as spoken, uttered by the Tathāgata, explains what was spoken, uttered by the Tathāgata as not spoken, not uttered by the Tathāgata; he explains what was not practised by the Tathāgata as practised by the Tathāgata, he explains what was practised by the Tathāgata as not practised by the Tathāgata; he explains what was not laid down by the Tathāgata as laid down by the Tathāgata, he explains what was laid down by the Tathāgata as not laid down by the Tathāgata, he explains what is no offence as an offence, he explains an offence as no offence; he explains a slight offence as a serious offence, he explains a serious offence as a slight offence; he explains an offence which can be done away with as an offence which cannot be done away with, he explains an offence which cannot be done away with as an offence which can be done away with; he declares a very bad offence as not a very bad offence, he explains not a very bad offence as a very bad offence. Sāriputta, a speaker of non-dhamma is to be known by these eighteen points.”
 - 9 There is no instance in the Canon, that I know of, that illustrates the bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs living together. It seems that the bhikkhus have an advisory role in terms of communal living and Vinaya (communal harmony and *garudhammas*) and Dhamma (see Vibhaṅga to Pācittiya 31 & MN 146), but that the contact is supposed to be limited (MN 21) and formal, i.e. every fortnight, and then even in turn by different senior monks (MN 146). Nowadays in the Theravāda countries male and female communities are always strictly segregated. Usually they have completely separate monasteries and, if not, they have their own independent sections.
Ayyā Tathālokā gave me a much clearer image of instances of the bhikkhunīs having their own *aramāyas*
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and *nilayams* (monasteries and nunneries):

“Bhikkhunīs, according to their Vinaya, must always gain permission to enter a monastery or monastic area where bhikkhus are dwelling. Additionally, bhikkhus may not come to bhikkhunīs' lodgings unless the bhikkhuni is gravely ill and has called for them [see Pācittiya 33 & A.IV.159]. Lodgings that belong to the Bhikkhu Saṅgha may be given whether temporarily or permanently, in case of bhikkhunīs' need or in case of overabundance (the bhikkhus' non-need). This means that what was a bhikkhu monastery can be given to bhikkhunīs (and vice-versa), but not that they were cohabitating. The contemporary archeological excavations of the monastery given by Anathapindika in Jetavana at Savatthi in India show that in this great monastery there was a Bhikkhu monastery section, a Bhikkhunī monastery section and then the Gandhā Kūṭi between them a little closer to the Bhikkhus' section. This is an interesting illustration of one of the greatest and earliest of the great Indian monasteries, which shows the bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs living separately but in close proximity to each other and to the Blessed One's place of most regular dwelling and teaching, when not on tour. A further such illustration along these lines is of the ancient rockcut cave monastery complex at Kanheri in Maharashtra on the Arabian Sea in the home area of the Arahant Punna. The cave monastery complex is enormous and had separate sections of the mountainside for the Bhikkhu monastery caves and the Bhikkhunī monastery caves, each with their separate places of convocation, but then with one great common area of gathering. This monastery is particularly noteworthy for recordings on the walls of the Bhikkhunī monastery section which show pupillary succession within the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha, from teacher to pupil – the bhikkhunīs' lineage. An interesting illustration to the contrary, which seems more in line with the literary references in the Canon, is of the great and ancient cave monastery complexes outside of Pune (also in Maharashtra), where Karle was the Bhikkhu monastery, and a few miles away is Bhaje, which was the Bhikkhunī monastery cave complex. From these examples, we find direct literary and archeological evidence that the Ubhato Saṅgha in the Buddha's lifetime and in the first millennium afterwards, had both types of arrangement in relationship to the location of Bhikkhu monasteries to Bhikkhunī Ubhato monasteries; that is, of both completely separate and independant monasteries and of great monasteries in which there were separate Bhikkhu and Bhikkhunī sections or cloisters.”

(Regarding *sāmaṇeras* and *sāmaṇerīs* [or *śīladharās* in British lineage], they belong to the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhunī Saṅgha respectively, and relations would be managed in the same way.)

- 10 Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi wrote to me: “The monastic and government councils can make their declarations, but if the women recognize one another as bhikkhunīs, and a sufficient number of bhikkhus support them (how many?), and the lay community (at least substantial numbers) treat them as bhikkhunīs, then for all practical purposes, *they are* bhikkhunīs. It seems there is no 'divine authority' that one can ask to decide their status.”
- 11 That could perhaps resolve the current “cultural crash” between the Thai system and the Western idealism of equality, and thus offer a possibility for women to ordain as bhikkhunīs without trying to be institutionalized into the Bhikkhu lineage.