

BHIKKUNI MISSION TO CHINA

It is recorded that a mission of Nuns headed by Theri Devasara went to China during the reign of King Mahanama (412-434 A.C.) and established the Order of Nuns there. They left Sri Lanka in 434 A.C. or 426 A.C. (*sic*). Both dates are mentioned in separate records. They belonged to the Abhayagiri Vihara Sect. They sojourned in China for eight years until a further batch of Nuns was obtained from Sri Lanka so that a sufficient number was present to conduct ordination rites and ceremonies. The records of the Chinese monk Fa-Hian who visited Anuradhapura during King Mahanama's time, reveal that the more popular sect of the time was the Abhayagiri Nikaya. According to him there were 3000 monks at the Mahavihara, while the Abhayagiri had 5000 monks.

The following is a translation from the "Tripitaka Daisho", the Chapter on the First Fully Ordained Bhikkhuni in China whose name was Chu Ching Chien, Chulin Temple, Loyang, China; Liu Sung, Emperor Wen 500 A.C.

"..... beyond the western frontier of China, there are two groups of Sangha, men and women, but in this land the Sangha is not complete (There is only one). Chien shaved her hair and followed the Monks and received the ten precepts (of the samanerika)".

"..... during the Chin Dynasty, in the year of Hsien Kang (335 A.C.) the Bhikshu called Chien obtained the Bhikshuni Rituals (ceremony) and the Precepts Book for the Bhikshunis from the county of Jou Chin (outside of the frontier). In the first year of Hsing Tang (345 A.C.) on the eight day of the second month (Chinese calendar, March), it was translated at that time into Chinese at Loyang. At that time, on the Precepts Platform, the foreign monk called Tannochiehto (Dharmagupta), translated the Bhikshuni precepts for Chu Ching Chien and three other women. In the country of China, this is the beginning of the Bhikshuni Precepts. Chu Ching Chien is the first Bhikshumi in China."

These two articles have been extracted from "New World Buddhism"