

Maritime Transmission of the Monastic Order of Nuns to China

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This short paper is a study of the issues concerning the transmission of the proper Bhiksuni Ordination to China from Sri Lanka. It is reported in Baochang's 寶唱 (467-534?) *Biqiunizhuan* (the Biography of Nuns) that an Indian merchant named Nanti 竺難提 came to China by ship in 429 from the sea route in the south. He brought together with him eleven Buddhist nuns to establish the dual ordination for Bhiksunis in China, but three died on the way and eight survived. However the requirement for such dual ordination ceremony is ten fully ordained nuns so the merchant Nanti was asked to go back and bring some more nuns for the purpose. As a result, the merchant Nanti again brought another three nuns headed by Devasara to China in 433. Thus the dual ordination for Bhiksunis was performed and the proper Buddhist Bhiksuni Order was established in China. This story demonstrates first the close relationship between merchants and Buddhism and without the help of merchants Buddhism might not be so successfully transmitted to other part of Asia. This is particularly true for the sea route from India to China. Second the importance of the maritime trade route from South Asia through South East Asia to China and Far East.