

**Thesis Title: BURMESE BUDDHIST NUNS IN THE THERAVĀDA TRADITION
AND THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARDS SOCIAL WORK**

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ABSTRACT

Throughout history, women in religious service have faced oppression, degradation and exploitation. In Burma, particularly, the foundation of civil society - the religious sector - downplays and undermines the status and efforts of Buddhist nuns. The nuns have undergone significant historical persecution in both the religious and social spheres. While many Burmese Buddhist nuns dedicate their lives to overcoming that oppression, the contemporary situation impedes their progress because it is grounded in the historical situation. To ameliorate the status quo, an analysis of the historical context has been carried out with a corresponding evaluation of the current situation. Nuns practising in the central Burma were surveyed to ascertain their expectations, their educational backgrounds and the role and status they enjoy in society. Three case studies of nunneries have been selected as archetypes of the present conditions. The problems they face are outlined in addition to the benefits they provide. Possible solutions to their problems are suggested. These solutions employ social work as a kind of active *mettā* to bring about the necessary changes in the religious sector and society at large.