

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND *BURMESE* BUDDHIST MONKS IN THE *KONBAUNG* PERIOD IN MYANMAR

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As Buddhism was considered the state religion of Burma (now Myanmar) in the *Konbaung* period (1752-1885 C.E.), the *Burmese* Buddhist monks played a crucial role not only in spiritual guidance but also in social service. For instance, education in that period was mainly based on monastic institutions. Sources reveal that there were two types of monastic institutions: one taught students only religious text, and the other provided not only religious but also secular education in areas such as medicine, astrology, music, art of war, etc. In return, the lay society also provided the four requisites and other necessary things to the members of *Saṅgha*. However, the question of whether there were any challenges for *Burmese Saṅgha* in social relationships with lay society remains to be answered. The central aim of this research paper is to shed light on the relationship between the *Burmese Saṅgha* and the lay community. In order to investigate their relationship, the data for this research were collected from various old historical records such as *Burmese* chronicles, inscriptions, manuscripts, and other historically related research publications. This research explores that the *Burmese Saṅgha* in that period served as spiritual leaders, translated not only Buddhist texts but also other secular texts such as medicine, and law into *Burmese*, and compiled several types of texts. In addition, due to the situation, they were involved in social activities such as peace-making, serving as state counselors, and providing guidance to administration, and providing judgment. Although the kings in the *Konbaung* dynasty highly supported the members of *Saṅgha*, such as conferring religious titles and giving royal patronage, there were records to show that monks were suppressed. This paper suggests that although *Burmese* monks served as religious leaders and social workers for the lay community, they faced several challenges in their relationship with them. Moreover, *Burmese Saṅgha's* contributions still affect Myanmar's current society.

Keywords: *Burmese Saṅgha*, social service, social relationship, monastic education, texts