

Lecture

Thai Bhikkhuni, International Treaties, and Rights of Minorities

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This presentation examines the commitments of Southeast Asian governments, with a focus on Thailand, to gender equality. It looks at regional, and international treaties signed for the promotion of equal gender rights, and then contrasts these formally ratified agreements with the status of Buddhist nuns (Bhikkhuni) in Thailand, and the region. The presentation asks whether the behaviour of the Bhikkhu align with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979. Despite notable reservations made by some countries, the majority of Southeast Asian nations nevertheless ratified the Convention.

This study considers the role of the Thai Bhikkhuni and the pledge to gender equality, in light of these reservations to CEDAW. The argument suggests that a distinction between the role of women in the public, and the religious spheres are conducive to the creation of an inequality regime (Acker 2009). If political systems across the region advocates for equality and freedoms for all, one may ask how patriarchal religious hierarchy is able to marginalize its female counterpart and at time conflict with the intention of political leaders.

Manuel Litalien is an associate professor at Nipissing University, Department of Social Welfare and Social Development. He is a co-instigator for PhiLab (2018), a funded research group focusing on Philanthropy. He has published a monograph, *La philanthropie religieuse en tant que nouveau capital démocratique* (Presses de l'Université Laval), several book chapters and articles.



His areas of interest include Southeast Asia, development, welfare regimes, philanthropy, governance, social policy, religion, ethnicity, identity politics, diasporic studies, nationalism and violence. He also currently holds an adjunct position at Mahidol University in Thailand.