

Women, Religion, and Democracy in Myanmar

Women should always respect their **sons as masters**, and **husbands as God**.

Bestiality is spiritually nobler than interracial or interfaith marriage.

Women should engage in **incest** instead of reproducing impure offspring.

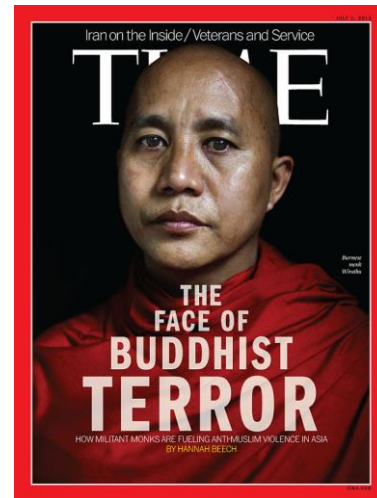
These ideologies have been perpetuated in a **democracy!**

What happens when an undemocratic nationalist and a democratic women's movement coexist in a new democracy?

969 Nationalist Movement

Nationalist monks' organization, MaBaTha

- Leader, WiRaThu, former prisoner for hate speech
- "Burma for Buddhist Burman," threatened racial and religious purity



Women's Movement

- Women activists and CSO's (Civil Society Organizations)
- Gender equality and women's rights
- Countering ultra-nationalism and sexism

Methods

1. The rhetoric and to what extent each has reached the public via social media
2. How each movement has influenced Burmese formal politics
3. Indonesia as a comparator case
A possibility that results for Burma and Indonesia might be generalized to other new democracies

Results

- Nationalists have significantly more social media following
- "Laws for the Protection of Race & Religion" (Crouch 2016)
 - The Myanmar Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Law
 - The Population Control Law
- Strong resistance from the women's movement, 180 CSOs (Walton et. al, 2015)
- Indonesia: post-Suharto surge of religious nationalism
 - Polygamy & Introduction of Sharia law into legal codes

Conclusion

- A power struggle between women activists and nationalist monks to influence the democratic government
- Potential and space for women to enable a future with increased rights
- Decline in quality of life and personal liberty
- Further research