

BUDDHIST VIOLENCE IS WIDELY CONSIDERED AN OXYMORON.

The idea of a militarized Buddhist monastery or a Buddhist monk holding a handgun stretches the imagination—yet these things are seen in southern Thailand. Michael K. Jerryson offers an extensive examination of one of the least-known, but longest-running conflicts in Southeast Asia. The conflict in Thailand's southernmost provinces is fueled by religious divisions. Although Thailand's total population is over 92 percent Buddhist, more than 85 percent of the people in the southernmost provinces are Muslim. Since 2004, the Thai government has imposed martial law over the territory to combat a grass-roots Malay Muslim insurgency.

Through fieldwork in the primary area of conflict, Jerryson chronicles the habits of Buddhist monks in the militarized zone. Many Buddhist practices remain unchanged: monks continue to chant, counsel the laity, and accrue merit. At the same time, however, monks zealously advocate Buddhist nationalism, act as covert military officers, and equip themselves with guns. *Buddhist Fury* reveals the ways in which religion alters the nature of the conflict and the dangers that accompany such a transformation.

"This remarkable and powerful study, based on extensive field research in a contested region of southern Thailand, shatters the image of Buddhist nonviolence. Armed Buddhist monks justify their militant role in defending the faith, and show that the spiritual and social, personal and political, and warring and peaceful sides of religious life are intertwined in Buddhism just as they are in every other religious tradition. This thoughtful, readable book is essential for anyone who wants to understand the dark side of Buddhism and the ambiguous role that religious violence plays in global public life."

Mark Juergensmeyer, author of

Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State

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