



Renunciation and Power: The Quest for Sainthood in Contemporary Burma (Southeast Asia Studies Monograph Series)

Guillaume Rozenberg

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This monograph explores the identity of a seemingly paradoxical figure: the Burmese Buddhist saint, who departs for the forest to combine harsh asceticism with radical world renunciation, yet also seeks active involvement in the affairs of society. Examining the trajectory and work of eight living monks committed to the quest for salvation, Rozenberg contradicts representations of Theravada Buddhist saints as single-minded pursuers of nirvana. On the contrary, he shows how work for the temporal welfare and spiritual advancement of all is integral to a Burmese saint's identity. The saint predicts winning lottery numbers, redistributes goods donated to him, and develops building complexes essential to the spread of Buddhism. Throughout the book, otherwise obscure notions of spiritual power are reconsidered and explicated in a Burmese context.

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