**PhD Thesis abstract – Kaja Berg Hjukse**

This thesis examines marriage and divorce among Buddhist women in Pyin Oo Lwin, Myanmar, during the reform era. It begins with an apparent contradiction: in Myanmar, divorce appears rare in official statistics. Yet, in practice, conjugal conflict and dissolution are widespread.

Based on fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork (2017–2019), the thesis follows women's experiences across the *marital spectrum*—from courtship and weddings to married life, through uncoupling and divorce. It highlights the ambivalent role of marriage for women in this period of political-economic liberalisation and social transformation. On the one hand, marriage was a site of aspiration and care. On the other, it was a source of vulnerability and ill health. Divorce was highly stigmatised and associated with increased economic precarity and the risk of violence.

The thesis shows that, in Pyin Oo Lwin, women sometimes lived apart from their husbands for extended periods without identifying as divorced, and marriages often ended gradually and partially, reflecting women's careful navigation of stigma, risk, and relatedness. As a result, divorce remained both present and unspoken in women's lives. To capture this, the thesis develops the concept of *spectral divorce*, which highlights how the anticipation and negotiation of divorce informed women's practices across time—sometimes also before marriage begins and long after it ends.

While the anthropology of marriage has tended to treat divorce separately from marriage, this thesis argues that marriage and divorce are co-constitutive. It contributes to the anthropology of marriage and divorce by reframing them as a single analytical field in which the possibility of endings is central to how marriage is experienced as a gendered and uncertain practice.