

Introduction

The earliest recorded inhabitants (races) of this country were the Pyu and Mon who established independent kingdoms in central and lower Myanmar. There emerged four ancient Pyu cities: Beikthano, Tagaung, Halin and Srikshetra were said to have flourished between the first and ninth centuries. However, according to the archeological excavations being carried out at the ancient sites, Pyu civilization emerged in about 500 B.C..

By about the 10th century, the Pyu and the Myanmar merged peacefully paving the way to the emergence of Bagan (1044-1298).

In 1057, the Mon Kingdom of Thaton was sacked by Anawrahta (1044-77) and its clergy was induced to make Bagan as the centre of Theravada Buddhism. King Anawrahta was the first unifier and maker of Myanmar.

Like other nationalities of other countries in the East, it was Myanmar tradition to take skilled craftsmen and performing artists from a conquered state to their capital, thereby

improving the quality of the indigenous arts and crafts. The main influence in music, dance and drama came from Thailand.

Under the kings of the Konbaung Dynasty (1752-1885) the Myanmar clashed with the British in India, resulting in the wars of 1824, 1852 and 1885. Myanmar became the British colony in 1885. During the World War II, the Japanese forces occupied Myanmar until the arrival of Allied Forces in 1945. Myanmar regained her independence from Britain in 1948.

Myanmar which borders China and India indeed owes much to these great civilizations. However, her culture is neither that of China nor India but a blend of both interspersed with Myanmar traits and characteristics. The character of Myanmar, their notions and their way of life have been formed and shaped by Buddhist teachings.

This Book traces the origin and development of the arts of dance and drama from the earliest times.

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