

Contents

Introduction

Chapter 1

The History

Chapter 2

The Puppet Theatre in Konbaung Period

Chapter 3

The Puppet Theatre in Colonial Period

Chapter 4

The Puppet Theatre in Independent Myanmar

Chapter 5

The Decline of the Puppet Theatre

Chapter 6

Minister for Theatre

Chapter 7

1821 Decrees concerning Marionettes

Chapter 8

The Puppets

Chapter 9

The Puppet Stage

Chapter 10	70
A Puppet Troupe	
Chapter 11	81
A Puppet Performance	
Chapter 12	95
Lamaing Nat	
Appendises	
Appendix I	
Maha Janaka	101
Appendix II	
Sambula	105
Appendix III	
Nandiya Kumma	106
Appendix IV	
King Thiha Bahu	110
Appendix V	
Princess Shway Phaw Eine	114
Appendix VI	
Shwe Phyin Brothers	118
Appendix VII	
Mya Sein	121
Appendix VIII	
Pauk Kyaing	125
Appendix IX	
80,000 Hermits	129
Bibliography	133
Index	137

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Pyu Bronze Statuettes	
2. Htupayon Pagoda Inscriptions	
3. Theatre Pavillion	
4. 18th century Painting	
5. Thagyamin	
6. Nats or Spirits	
7. Dances of Natkadaw and Ahpyodaws	
8. Hermit	
9. King Holding Court	
10. Lion Throne	
11. Princes	
12. Princesses	
13. Duet Dances	
14. Mother and Child	
15. Benevolent Senior Prince	
16. Despotic King	
17. Villainous Senior Prince	
18. Ministers	
19. Jesters	
20. Brahmins	
21. Royal Page Boys	
22. Old Couple	
23. Royal Child	
24. Horse	
25. Monkey	
26. Demons	
27. Kinnaras	
28. Galon and Naga	
(29,30)	
31. White Elephant	
32. Tiger	
33. Puppeteer	
34. Stork	
35. Zawgyi-theurgist	
36. Construction of Puppets	
37. Embroidered Costumes	
38. Preparation of Paints	
39. Live and Puppet Dances	
40. Various Controls	
41. Symbolic Throne	
42. The Author Performing	
43. Live Ramayana Play	
44. Puppet Ramayana Play	
45. Modern Puppets	
46. Myanmar Saing-Waing Orchestra	



MARIONETTES of MYANMAR

The manuscript of this book was awarded First Prize for the year 2011 by the Sarpay Beikman Institute of Literature Ministry of Information on the 14th December 2012 at Napyitaw.

This book traces the origin and development of Myanmar puppetry from the earliest times.

The methods and processes of puppet making, the preparation of paints, embroidery, and stringing and costuming of puppets are described.

It also deals with the dramatic practices and presentation of the puppet theatre.

Finally, the stories in outline of seven plays, the story of the Patron Spirit of Theatre plus the humorous tale about an old puppeteer have been compiled for the first time.

Introduction

The earliest recorded inhabitants (races) of Myanmar were the Pyu and the Mon who established independent kingdoms in Central and Lower Myanmar. There emerged three ancient Pyu cities. Beikthano, 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 Pyu city of Tagaung, Pyu civilization emerged in about 500 B.C..

In AD 801, Yung-chiang, the Pyu King of Srikshetra sent a diplomatic and cultural mission to the court of the Chinese Emperor Dezong (r.779-805) of Tang Dynasty at the capital of Chang-an (Xian). The hazardous journey which began in June, 801 was to last 214 days. It is recorded in the *New Tang Dynasty Chronicle* that in February 802, thirty-five entertainers from the Pyu kingdom appeared. Emperor Te Tsung was so impressed that he bestowed titles on the leaders of the troupe.

By about the 10th Century, the Pyu and the Myanmar merged peacefully paving the way to the emergence of Bagan (1044-1298) as the centre of Theravada Buddhism. King Anawrahta (r.1044-77) was the first unifier of Myanmar. The second Myanmar empire was founded by King Bayinnaung (r.1551-81). King Alaung Phaya (r.1752-60) founded the last Konbaung Dynasty in 1752 and it was during the zenith of this

dynasty that the British moved in. Like India, Myanmar became the British colony after three Anglo-Myanmar wars in 1824, 1852 and 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.

Performing arts in Myanmar such as singing, dancing, music and drama have been well developed for centuries. Among the performing arts, characteristically Myanmar and indigenous to the country is the puppet theatre which has a tradition of about six centuries.

In 1776, all the performing artists were brought under the control of a minister for theatre who compiled a list of rules to be observed by them.

Constituent periods or dynasties of the History of Myanmar are the Pyu Period (1st to 9th centuries), the Bagan Period (1044-1298), the Pinya Period (1299-1363), the Innwa Dynasty (1364-1596), the Taungoo Dynasty (1527-1569), the Nyaungyan Dynasty (1597-1751) and the Konbaung Dynasty (1752-1885) respectively.

This Book traces the origin and development of puppetry from the earliest times. The lengthy processes of carving and making puppets, the centuries old method of preparation of paints are explained and the various costumes with which the many characters were decorated described. It also deals with the traditions observed by members of a troupe

who were influenced by the spirit worship practiced in the country. Finally, the stories in outline of seven plays still being performed by both the puppet and live theatres, the story of the patron spirit of the theatre plus the humorous tale about and old puppeteer have here been compiled for the first time.