

**THE INFLUENCE OF BRAHMANISM IN MYANMAR
BEFORE THE BRITISH COLONIAL PERIOD**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation studies Brahmanical influence in Myanmar society and culture from the beginning of the Christian era to the end of the Konbaung dynasty. In the opening of the Christian era, trade relations began to develop between India and Myanmar and other countries in Southeast Asia. Based on this Myanmar absorbed Buddhist and Brahmanic elements into their traditional culture patterns. There was a great deal of religious syncretism in the early kingdoms of Myanmar — Śrīkṣetra, Viṣṇu, Halin, etc. — but Buddhism had a far greater popular appeal than Brahmanism which was confined to the Brahman caste. The royal court also played a significant role in the development of the new culture with its blending of Myanmar Buddhists and Brahmanic elements. Brahmans led Myanmar kings to celebrate the royal ceremonies: coronation, head-washing and new palace building ceremonies. For secular purposes, Myanmar culture adopted a great deal of Brahmanism. It was not only the court elite but also Myanmar Buddhist in general who accepted Brahmanism into their superstitious beliefs and practices. Myanmar practiced Brahmanic beliefs: Brahmanical deities propitiation, the planetary worship, reciting *mantras*, and vedic prognostigation and Brahmanic literatures — astrological works, medical texts, arithmetical accounts, *niti* (maxims), *chanda* (prosody) etc. Although Myanmar became a Buddhist stronghold Brahmanism coexisted in some ambivalence as a semi-Buddhistic cult with particular influence in the secular field.

CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-------------|
| Abstract | iv |
| List of Illustrations | v |
| Introduction | x |
| Chapter I Coming of Brahmanism | 1 |
| Chapter II Brahminical Practices | 58 |
| Chapter III Brahmanism in Social Life | 103 |
| Conclusion | 144 |
| Appendix I Cintāmaṇi Mantra | 146 |
| Appendix II Vaisnavite – Peacock Circle | 147 |
| Appendix III The Contents of the Amarakos'a | 148 |
| Appendix IV Planetary Spirits: Metal, Colour of Complexion, Ficial figuares, Compass, Material for burning | 156 |
| Bibliography | 157 |