

## A Brief History Background of the Mon and its National Day

The Mon was one of the earliest people who settled in South East Asia. They have the longest history and became one of the greatest Nations in South East Asia. According to the Burmese chronicle the Mons were the first people to inhabitance in Burma. They arrived in Burma probably between 2500 and 1500 B.C. The Mons was close cousins of Khamers, with whom they originally came down from Mongolia, since they settled in some parts of Thailand, and along Tenasserim, and on the Irrawady delta of Burma.

The first strong Mon Kingdom in Burma was well-known as Suwannabhumi, the Golden Land. As mentioned in the history of Mahavamsa, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., Emperor Asoka, the great Buddhist King of India, sent a mission of the Buddhist monks Venerable Sona and Uttara to Suwannabhumi, modern Thaton of Mon State, where the center of Theravada Buddhism is flourishing. It is now a lower Burma and also known as Ramannayadesa.

Before the establishment of the first Burman kingdom, Pagan, the Mon both Thailand and Burma were politically organized as the confederacy of Ramannya and embraced the three kingdom of Suwannabhumi, modern Thaton of today's lower Burma, Dvaravati, modern Nakhonpathum and Haripunjaya, modern Larmphun of Northern Thailand.

The second wave of people to have come to Burma after Mon was the Tibeto-Burman from the North. After the Burman King Anoratha came into the throne of Pagan, he challenged and conquered the Theravada Buddhism in Mon Kingdom, Suwanabhumi, in 1057 A.D. It was not by peaceful means but by force.

The conquest of Pagan was the foundation of both Pagan's economy and its culture. The Mon craftsmen, artrismans, architects, goldsmith and wood-carvers were captured from Thaton, Sumannabhumi, to Pagan to teach their skill and arts to the Burman. There is no room to doubt that almost the Burman cultures have been adopted from the Mon said by G. H. Luce in his work of Old Burma, Early Pagan. Therefore, both Mon and Burman cultures are hard to distinguish. The Burman alphabet is also based on the Mon alphabet. It was used in Pagan for more the 200 years during Pagan Dynasty.

In fact, the most well-known of the last Mon kingdom, Hongsawatoi, now known as Pegu, which is 50 miles away from Yangon, the capital of Burma, founded by the Mon Prince Samala and Prince Wiamala in 572 A.D. They are brothers. The last sovereign of Mon Kingdom, which covered the whole of today's Lower Burma, had flourished in peace and prosperity for several centuries until it was invaded and annexed by the neighboring Burman kingdom in 1757 A.D. The Mons have ever since become a people without a country and been reduced to a minority race in Burma. The Mon kingdom has fallen into Burma's ruler for 253 years as of today.

After the inversion and annexation of the Mon kingdom, the Burman ruler, U Aungzeya who is better known as King Alaungphaya, persecuted the Mon by genocidal mass execution whereby thousands of Mon, including children and the pregnant, were exterminated in several stockade-inferno holocausts, similar to the destruction of Jews in Nazi.

The Mon monk named "Akworh" of Waw Myoh (a nearby town of Pegu) who was the most famous Mon writer of his time and who also experienced the ruthless atrocities inflicted upon the Mon people by the Burman King Alaungphaya- stated that Alaungphaya was the most cruel, blood thirsty king who even killed over 3,000 Mon Buddhist monks and also destroyed almost all the Mon manuscript and stone inscriptions, and that Alaungphaya even changed the ethnic name of the Mon to "Talaing", which means "bastard" and by which the

Mon people have halted to be called up to the present day. In the face of the ruthless genocidal operation by the Burman King, hundreds of thousands of Mon fled to Saim, present day Thailand, for their safety. But Alaunghaya is highly admired as the founder of the Third Burman Empire by the Burman people in general up to the present day, and Alaunghaya-honoring songs have frequently been broadcasted in Burma up to the present SLORC/SPDC administration to raise moral in Burmese Army, tantamount to insulting the Mon People.

Moreover, the current situations of Mon people become worse and worse. The current Burman military regime uses ethnic-cleansing policies to clean out diverse ethnic groups, including the Mon. The teachings of the Mon language have been banned and the celebration of the Mon National Day has been restricted. Furthermore, the Burman troops committed serious human rights violations such as rape, looting, forced labor and summary execution of innocent civilians in Monland. Since 1988, thousands of Mon people have fled to refugee camps along the Thailand-Burma border to escape the oppression of military dictatorship government. As we have been fighting the Burman military regime since 1988 uprising, we the Mons deeply concerned about human rights violations and devastating in our homeland. Due to various oppressions of the military dictatorship government the Mon and other ethnic groups have been immigrating to the United States of America gradually.

In solidarity with our comrades who have been fighting the Burman military regime and all the oppressed people of Burma, we whole-heartedly found the Mon Land Restoration Council (MRC) on the 5<sup>th</sup> November 1993 in the United States of America gradually in order to fulfill the following objectives:

1. To bring an end of a civil war in Burma and to struggle for the establishment of a genuine Democratic Federal Union of Burma that guarantees autonomy equality and ethnic nationalities' rights to self-determination.
2. To defend the basic human rights of the Mon people and to strive to restore the language, culture, literature and custom (that have been suppressed by the successive Burman military.)
3. To assist those Mon refugees who have been persecuted by the Burman military.
4. To destroy and annihilate the inhuman cruel practices that military have adapted and to establish everlasting peace.

In order to commemorate the founded day of the last Mon Kingdom, Hongsawatoi, many Mon Buddhist monks and scholars anonymously decided that the founded day of Hongsawatoi is supposed to be the "Mon National Day", which is to be celebrated annually by the entire Mon Nation. It has been started in 1947. So far it has been coming to the 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary. Indeed, according to the Mon calendar, Mon National Day is the 1<sup>st</sup> waning day of 11<sup>th</sup> lunar month, which usually falls in February.

Hence, Mon National Day is a very significant day for the entire Mon people in Monland, Burma, Thailand, and all over the world.

Monland Restoration Council

