Assignment Activity Unit 4

Department of Computer Science, UoPeople

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Instructor Kelechi Onyeneke

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The colonial rule of Burma (now Myanmar) by the British from 1885 to 1931 brought about big changes in Burmese culture and society. This period was full of struggles as the Burmese tried to keep their traditions alive while dealing with the pressures of adopting British ways. The article "Burmese Culture During the Colonial Period in the Years 1885-1931" by Tobiasz Targosz explains these changes and gives a detailed look at how colonialism impacted the Burmese way of life. The British takeover began after a series of wars and ended with complete control over Burma. This changed the country’s economy, turning it into a provider of raw materials for the global market, which caused major shifts in how Burmese people lived and worked (Targosz, 2016). While the British introduced new technologies and built infrastructure, they also disrupted traditional values, local customs, and social systems. The result was a feeling of being culturally lost for many Burmese people. One interesting idea discussed in the article is "cultural mimicry," where some Burmese elites copied British practices to adapt to the colonial system. This wasn’t just about imitating Western ways; it was also a way for the Burmese to find a balance between preserving their identity and surviving under British rule. For example, they adopted certain British habits but kept their own beliefs and traditions intact. This shows how colonized societies often mix resistance and adaptation in creative ways (Targosz, 2016). Another major issue was how the British created divisions among ethnic groups by favoring certain minorities over the majority Burmese population. This caused a lot of tension and mistrust, which still affects Myanmar today. The removal of the Burmese monarchy in 1885 made things worse because it broke the close connection between the king and Buddhism, which had always been an important part of Burmese identity. Many uprisings followed, with people fighting to bring back their traditional way of life. However, Western historians often describe these uprisings as purely nationalist movements, ignoring their cultural and religious motivations (Targosz, 2016). This shows a bias in how colonial histories are often written, with more focus on the colonizers’ perspective and less on the experiences of the colonized. To better understand this period, it’s important to look at Burmese sources and not just rely on British accounts. The article argues that by doing this, historians can create a fuller picture of what life was like during colonial rule. In conclusion, the colonial period in Burma shows how powerful the relationship between culture and identity can be when a society is under foreign rule. The Burmese experience of resisting and adapting to British influence highlights how colonized people found ways to fight for their identity in a challenging time. Understanding this history helps us see how colonialism still shapes Myanmar today and provides insights into other post-colonial societies.

### Reference

Targosz, T. (2016). Burmese Culture During the Colonial Period in the Years 1885-1931. Politeja, 44, 297-310. https://doi.org/10.12797/Politeja.13.2016.44.18