

THE BIRMAN CAT SACRED TEMPLE CATS OF BURMA

These beautiful cats have long, soft creamy/white fur, with darker points, pure white paws and deep blue eyes.

HISTORY:

To appreciate the legend which is about to be told, one must visualise the beautiful temples in the land of Burma. The magnitude of the Buddha idols helps to impress upon us the deep religious faith the people have. Their belief in the reincarnation of souls and their deep respect and love for their priests provide the setting for this legend. Their watchful and loving care of the 100 white cats (Temple cats) is due to their belief that the priests are returned to the temple in the form of the sacred cats of Burma known as Birman cats. The origin of the white gloved feet and the colouring goes back before the birth of Christ.

Centuries ago the Khymer people of Asia built beautiful temples of worship to pay homage to their gods. The temple of Lao-Tsun housed a beautiful golden goddess with sapphire blue eyes, who watched over the transmutation of souls. Mun-Ha, one of the most beloved of the priests, whose beard had been braided with gold by the great god Son-Hio, often knelt in meditation before the golden goddess Tsun-Kyan-Kse. Sinh, a beautiful and faithful temple cat, was always at his side, and shared his meditations. As the holy priest prayed, the sacred cat would gaze at the brilliant goddess. One night as the moon rose and Mun-Ha was kneeling before the sacred goddess, raiders attacked the temple and Mun-Ha was killed. At the moment of Mun-Ha's death, Sinh placed his feet upon his fallen master and faced the golden goddess. Immediately the hairs of his white body were as golden as the light radiating from the beautiful golden goddess, her beautiful blue eyes became his very own, and his four white legs shaded downwards to a velvety brown; but where his feet rested gently on his dead master, the whiteness remained white, thus denoting their purity.

The next morning the temple radiated with the transformation of the 100 white cats, which, like Sinh, reflected the golden hue of sunset. Sinh, the golden cat of Burma, never left the throne after his master's death. Then seven days later he too died, carrying with him into Paradise the soul of Mun-Ha his beloved master.

Since that time, the followers of Buddhism guard very carefully and gently the sacred ones within whose bodies live their beloved priests. Only a few (and they must be worthy in deed and manner) are permitted to possess one of these beautiful creatures. The people lived peacefully till the advent of Brahminism. The Brahmins felt that the Kittahs (priests) were practising a false religion, so they raided the temples and killed many venerable priests.

At this time two men, August Pavie and Major Russell-Gordon, journeyed from France to Burma. They were able to penetrate and bring protection to the lost Kittahs against the aggressive Brahmins. They were then able to see the 100 sacred cats and learn their legend.

Many of the Kittahs escaped and crossed the mountains of Burma into Tibet, taking with them their sacred cats. There they formed a new subterranean Temple of Lao-Tsun, the dwelling place of their gods. This temple is a marvel of marvels of Indo-China. Not far from a lake, it is hidden in a mass of immense peaks.

The two men returned to France, and because of the great love the Burmese people had for August Pavie and Major Gordon-Russell, who had protected them against their enemy, a pair of sacred cats was sent from the beautiful temple of Lao-Tsun to France, as a gesture of gratitude, in 1919. The ocean trip proved tragic however, for the male died. But it was found that the female was pregnant and thus the breed survived and became recognised in France in 1925.

It is believed by some however that the original Birman was taken by a servant and smuggled aboard the boat of one of the Vanderbilts. The male did actually die on the voyage but the female survived and was in kitten. It seems that one or more of the kittens landed up in France and a couple went to America. They were not as we know them today, as of course they have been improved by selective breeding. Breeding has resulted in seal, blue, lilac, red, cream, chocolate, tabby and other point colours.

The French breeders also had troubles of their own, as, at the end of the second world war only one pair of these sacred cats of Burma were left. The name Birman is derived from the French. (Burmese are totally unrelated.)

These cats have a wonderful temperament. They are sweet, gentle and very loving with a small voice. They are very beautiful and walk with a tiger-like gait.