# A Man Like Him

## Portrait of the Burmese Journalist, Journal Kyaw U Chit Maung

Journal Kyaw Ma Ma Lay

Ma Thanegi, translator

Cornell Southeast Asia Program

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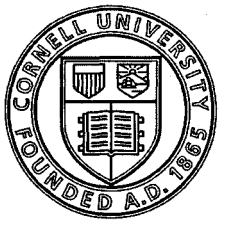


Cornell University

Wedding day of U Chit Maung and Daw Ma Ma Lay

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Daw Ma Ma Lay, with the high chignon fashionable in the 1930s

Portrait of Journal Kyaw U Chit Maung

Portrait of Journal Kyaw Ma Ma Lay
as a young widow

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# TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

## Ma Thanegi

*Thu-lo Lu* (A Man Like Him), is the story of the last eight years of Journal Kyaw U Chit Maung's life. This account was written ten months after his death in 1946 by his twenty-nine-year-old widow, Journal Kyaw Ma Ma Lay. It was first published in May 1947 and went through three printings in the same year. The tenth edition was published in 2003.

This young couple had published the prestigious *Journal Kyaw* weekly, and thus their names are forever associated with the paper. U Chit Maung was a great editor and committed patriot, and a brilliant, self-educated man who served his country well and who was deeply involved in politics from behind the scenes during the colonial period and the Japanese Occupation. He was a man who had no desire for power, position, or fame.

The eight short years of their union, from 1938 to 1946, covered a period of great change in the country, with the nationalist movement rising to the height of its fervor against British rule, followed by the Second World War and the Japanese Occupation.

*Thu-lo Lu* provides an insight into the politics and economy of Myanmar, as well as into the traditional relationships between parents and children, where personal pride has to give way in the face of love.

It is interesting to note the women's issues of that period, which are illuminated by this narrative, while at the same time learning about this unlikely romance between two very different personalities. Each word of this book shows how intensely they loved each other and how she supported him at all times. Theirs was a marriage of destiny. However, Journal Kyaw Ma Ma Lay herself was a much respected writer who achieved success in her own right and retained her identity and independence.

It is my privilege to translate this book, and the work has been a labor of love.

I am indebted to Dr. Daw Khin Lay Myint, professor of French, the daughter of U Chit Maung and Ma Ma Lay, and to the poet U Moe Hein, their son, for reading over the manuscript and making thoughtful suggestions.

I am also deeply grateful to Robert Taylor, who, busy as his schedule is, kindly took the time to write the introduction and edit my manuscript.

As I worked, my thoughts dwelt on my late uncle, journalist and editor Tetkatho Htin Gyi, who as a college newspaper reporter covered the 1938 students' demonstration, and who regaled me with stories of those times throughout my childhood. I am also indebted to my late friend Kyi Kyi Yin, known to many as "Ma," who introduced me to Journal Kyaw Ma Ma Lay's works when we were

students at the Institute of Economics. She and I are among the thousands of Myanmar women to whom Journal Kyaw Ma Ma Lay gave the strength to face life with courage. With this work, I am but repaying a minute amount of the debt that my friends and I owe to the writer.

In this translation, I have added footnotes to explain some Burmese terms, to provide biographical and geographical data, or to clarify historical facts. The name "Burma" was coined by the British through hearing the word "Bama," the name of the majority race. I have used the word "Myanmar" for the name of our country, since for centuries "Myanmar" has been its local name, a name first recorded on a stone inscription in 1235 AD and in use since that time. Also, I have used the original name "Yangon," which means "End of Strife," instead of "Rangoon." Some anglicized names remain unchanged where relevant.

A note for the reader: Myanmar proper names for an adult man are prefixed with the honorific, "U," pronounced "Oo," and for a woman, "Daw." When addressing a young man, one uses the prefix "Ko," or "Maung," and for a young woman, one uses "Ma." Sometimes "Maung" or "Ma" may be adopted as part of a person's pen name or performing name. Very close friends or family members may ignore the use of prefixes in addressing or referring to those younger than themselves, but it is never acceptable to address or refer to a person who is older without using the honorific prefix. In the text, a particular character may be identified with different prefixes; for instance, in one situation U Chit Maung refers to U Ba Hnin as "Ko Ba Hnin" when speaking informally.

"Thakin" for men and "Thakin-ma" for women were nationalist prefixes meaning "Master," used by Myanmar politicians during their fight for independence.

The Burmese do not take on family names. Each person has his or her own given name, and the same names recur frequently throughout the population. Also, a person can change his or her name to reflect his or her experiences, as noted above.

# FOREWORD
## Moe Hein

*Thu-lo Lu,* what a blessing that you have come out in an English version! My long-awaited desire now becomes a reality, though not of my making. I wanted so fervently to translate you myself ... who else would be as eager? Whenever I am introduced as my parents' child, the first word uttered by anyone having read you would be your name: *Thu-lo Lu.*

To all readers, you are an inspiration and role model, as they so often tell me. So what then held me back from translating? Two things. First, my head knew it was not competent to take up the task and, second, my heart feared the flood of feelings that would be unleashed, for within you both my parents are embodied. My mind would be laden with memories and feelings. In such a position, I cannot trust my hand. Sentimental—subjective—one may call me. But truly, I would be at a loss and the work a failure. You are far beyond my reach.

Now, fate has been so good as to provide a hand capable of mastering the task. With a strong spirit driving hard to fulfill its aim, this hand has transformed you, *Thu-lo Lu,* into a work for international presentation, thereby enabling you to cross all frontiers. The skilled work of the translator exactly reflects the tone and tempo of the original writer, and many more readers can now enjoy you. Moreover, footnotes and explanations are provided to give a fuller picture. What more could be expected? With heart and soul, the hand has painstakingly labored. It is a work of dedication and no less a work of art. Even if I had attempted to translate, I could not have done better.

When my eyes first fell upon the translated manuscript, I was reawakened. As before, *Thu-lo Lu,* you have brought back to life the ones I love. I see them, hear them, and feel them. Reborn am I! A man over sixty is simply reduced to a child of six. Tears of joy and sadness well up as I see my parents again in this translation.

*Thu-lo Lu,* in the same way that you have inspired many a reader in the past, so will you in the future. Your characters died long ago, but they are not dead, for in you they live. They continue to strengthen the morale and morals of readers through you.

What a blessing! Fate honors you with a translation, fate honors the hand that accomplished the work. As for me, I feel I do not even deserve this page, even though kindly offered. All in all, the two hands, one that first brought you to life and another that led you further, will leave a lasting imprint upon your readers.

"To Serve and Sacrifice"

Moe Hein
Son of Journal Kyaw
April 2006

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# PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

## BY JOURNAL KYAW MA MA LAY

In the preparation of this book, I did not have the ease that I had with my earlier works. This book was begun in the month of Tabaung, ten months after the death of its central character, my husband, Journal Kyaw U Chit Maung. In the actual writing of it, I found that I could hardly continue from one paragraph to the next. As I began to write it after U Chit Maung was no more with me, my heart felt as if it were burning, and this hampered my writing and delayed the completion of the book.

When I had previously advertised in the *Journal Kyaw* an upcoming book titled "A Man like Him," I had not meant this particular one. Instead, the title had been chosen for a novel intended to be a guide for young women in the choosing of marriage partners. Ultimately, if it had not been for someone who persuaded and entreated me to write about U Chit Maung, this book using the same title would not have been written.

Out of love and respect for my husband who had been his mentor, Tetkatho Ko Myo Thant repeatedly exhorted me to write this story about him—to show that someone of his stamp had lived and breathed, and to title it "A Man Like Him." There are other reasons, as Ko Myo Thant explained to me: in the recently published *Diary of U Chit Maung*, there is a poem in which he spoke of the extraordinary way in which he met me, the person destined to one day become his wife—

*"Coming to know you, through what fate ordained from times past ..."*—surely, Ko Myo Thant said, those who read this poem would wish to know the details of this first encounter.

Then, he said that, U Chit Maung having been a veritable storehouse of knowledge, his biography would have been full of illuminating and noteworthy facts. As he had been so uncomfortably shy in the presence of women as to earn the moniker of "monk," his "love story" would certainly be out of the ordinary, something that people would be exceedingly curious to know about. Ko Myo Thant also repeatedly argued that such vignettes from his life—from the time he met his destined wife to his last moments—would be of interest to his children and to other readers.

Therefore, since Ko Myo Thant was very persistent, and as I myself believed that my husband's biography should be written, this book has been produced and presented to my readers.

Innumerable biographies and autobiographies of prominent people have existed in the West since ages past. However, such works have not emerged in Myanmar, and I wondered whether I might not be too far ahead of the times in penning

something like this. I also had to weigh the benefits of revealing a late person's private affairs to the reading public.

However, it so happened that when U Chit Maung was alive, the two of us had promised each other that one day we would present each other with our life stories titled "My Husband" and "My Wife," respectively, and this really was the main reason for this book. Ever since that promise, every single day I had recorded all that I could about U Chit Maung with the writing of such a book in mind. However, the files of those records, meticulously maintained since our marriage, were partially lost when the house where we had been living during the Japanese Occupation, opposite the Teachers' Training College on Pyay Road, was heavily bombed shortly before the British reoccupation of Myanmar towards the end of World War II. I was heartbroken after this destruction of the fruits of nine years of laborious record keeping, and I despaired of ever producing the book in mind. But now, although it is not a full biography, this volume has come into being, and my initial objective has been fulfilled, although not in full, as I had hoped to do.

This work is not one of fiction written purely to arouse a reader's interest but is about real events. After the readers have gone through both volumes I and II[1] of this work, it is for them to decide if they have in fact found it interesting.

1309, Fifth Waning Moon Day of Kason
May 9, 1947

[1] The original edition of *Thu-lo Lu* was published in two volumes.

# BIOGRAPHY OF JOURNAL KYAW U CHIT MAUNG

U Chit Maung was born in 1912 in Oke Po, central Myanmar, to U Mya and Daw Saw Yu. When U Chit Maung finished high school, he was three years too young to be eligible for college. During the wait to attend college, he worked as a teacher at his own school and read all he could independently. While in his late teens, he moved to Yangon, applied for an opening at *Nawrahta* newspaper, and was hired as soon as he applied, even at such a tender age. When this paper folded, he went to work for *Myanmar Alin,* where he became chief editor, a post he held for many years without using the title. However, in 1940 he fell out with the publishers, who he felt were infringing on his rights as a journalist, and he left the paper, although he would still speak out on its behalf when necessary.

Thereafter, along with his wife, Daw Tin Hlaing (also called Ma Ma Lay), whom he had married in 1938, he published a weekly paper called *Journal Kyaw,* or *The Weekly Thunderer.* The paper became highly popular, as it was strongly supportive of the nationalistic movement and the rights of the poor. From that time, he became known as Journal Kyaw U Chit Maung and his wife as Journal Kyaw Ma Ma Lay.

U Chit Maung wrote several novels and a few nonfiction political works. His novel *Thu* (He) became an instant bestseller and is regarded as a classic of Myanmar literature. It was made into a feature movie that enjoyed box-office success.

During the Japanese Occupation, his intelligence work was unknown to others apart from a very few. He later joined the executive committee of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League party (AFPFL), formed under General Aung San, and was active in the fight for independence. Many of his suggestions were used in the demands submitted to the British. All his life, his goal was to serve his country without any wish for a political role or recognition. His diary entries and his last satirical poem were testaments, among many other works, of his lifelong disgust with the corruption that so often results from power.

He passed away on April 3, 1946, at the age of thirty-four, after a short illness, one year and nine months before Myanmar gained independence. He remains a highly respected figure and role model for generations of men and women of Myanmar.

# BIOGRAPHY OF JOURNAL KYAW MA MA LAY

Journal Kyaw Ma Ma Lay, the fourth child of Dawson Bank manager U Pyar Cho and Daw Kwi, was born on April 13, 1917, in Kamar Kalu, a village of the Bogalay township. Her given name was Ma Tin Hlaing. She finished middle school in Bogalay, where her father worked, and then studied up to the ninth grade (1932) at Yangon's Myoma Girls' High School. In 1938 she married U Chit Maung, chief editor of *Myanmar Alin.*

In 1946, U Chit Maung passed away, leaving behind his wife, a daughter, and two sons.

In 1959, Ma Ma Lay married U Aung Zeya, who took care of her the way she had taken care of U Chit Maung.

As a young girl, Ma Tin Hlaing was active in nationalistic activities in Bogalay, experiences from which she drew for her famous novel *Mon-yway Mahu* (which was translated into English as "Not Out of Hate"). The same book was also translated into French by her daughter, Daw Khin Lay Myint, who was a professor of French, under the title *La mal Aimée.*

Ma Ma Lay was the co-publisher of *Journal Kyaw* and editor for both the *Journal Kyaw* and *Pyi-thu hit-taing* papers (1939), vice chair of the Women's Pen Club and editor of *Writers' Magazine* (1947), chair of the Union of Myanmar Journalists Association (1948–49), and secretary of the Union of Myanmar Writers' Club (1961–62). Besides her novels, Ma Ma Lay wrote many short stories. She used the pen name Journal Kyaw Ma Ma Lay, adopting the title of the journal that she helped publish, in the same way that her first husband was known as Journal Kyaw U Chit Maung. She was also a renowned and successful indigenous medicine healer.

In spite of her well-to-do background, she often wrote about poverty-stricken urban workers or peasants. For those pieces she did extensive research, and few other writers managed to capture and convey the details that make her subjects seem to come to life. Almost all of her writings addressed the role of women in society and the workplace. In her time, the majority of writings were "Pyin nyar pay," that is, "educational" works to teach the young about issues of morality, and *A Man Like Him* is no different.

While Ma Ma Lay supported the traditional social norms of decorous behavior for women and thought that women should fulfill their "housewifely" duties, she nevertheless made a strong call for women to value intelligence and independence, and to have successful careers. She stood out among the other educated, gracious, and well-bred Burmese women of her day as a great writer and role model for many.

She passed away in Yangon on April 6, 1982.

# INTRODUCTION

# JOURNAL KYAW U CHIT MAUNG AND MYANMAR'S LATE-COLONIAL POLITICS

BY ROBERT H. TAYLOR

The decade prior to the death of Journal Kyaw U Chit Maung, in 1946, including the eight or so years described so effectively by his widow Journal Kyaw Ma Ma Lay in the book *Thu-lo Lu*, were among the most significant of Myanmar's turbulent twentieth century. The seeds then planted helped bring forth the British colony's tortured post-independence civil strife and the eventual rise of socialist autarky and military rule. These years witnessed the administrative separation of the Province of Burma from India; the introduction of a system of limited parliamentary democracy for the majority of the population; the growth of student and left-wing ideological ferment and radical nationalist agitation, international intrigue, and war; and, finally, the rise of armed resistance and multi-sided, mass political struggle verging on revolution. Whereas Myanmar commenced this period as an effective and outwardly prosperous colonial economy, it ended the era with its major industries and their markets devastated and its people suffering extreme economic deprivation. The legacy of those eventful years is still apparent in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

U Chit Maung and Daw Ma Ma Lay were at the center of those developments, as *Thu-lo Lu* makes clear, both chronicling events and attempting to guide them. The hugely different social and economic backgrounds of this unusual couple highlight one of the fascinating aspects of late-colonial Myanmar. While Daw Ma Ma Lay came from a prosperous family—her father worked for the only Myanmar-based, but British-owned, bank in the country, a major supplier of agricultural credit to the country's farmers—U Chit Maung was from a relatively impoverished small town in the central dry zone of the country. Their small-town origins, fierce independence, and keen intellects, as well as their mastery of English and desire to see an end to Myanmar's colonial status, were perhaps the only things this couple initially shared. As Daw Ma Ma Lay lived without want or care, reading books and magazines from

England in the midst of Myanmar's rice-growing Ayeyarwaddy delta, her lush environment stands in marked contrast to the arid circumstances of U Chit Maung's boyhood in Myanmar's dry-zone cultural heartland. While both came to develop a deep apprehension of the contemporary world and its challenges and opportunities, both never forgot their diverse Myanmar origins.

The complexity of the years described in the book is obvious from the tale itself. For those who are unfamiliar with the saga of Myanmar's late-colonial political economy and social history, it may well seem incredibly perplexing. It was a colony full of contradictions and conundrums. Despite the country's colonial status, the press was relatively free, and censorship of books and other published material did not become onerous until the beginning of the Second World War and the introduction of the Defense of Burma Act and Rules after 1939. The British were so confident of their power and the stability of their empire that the existence in Burma of a free nationalist press and the development of political parties, some with their own "private armies" of unarmed supporters, was not seen as a major threat. The introduction of electoral politics in the early 1920s and the expansion of elected ministers' powers in a Westminster-style cabinet government following the introduction of the Government of Burma Act on April 1, 1937, were seen as steps in Myanmar's inevitable, but still distant, evolution as a self-governing dominion of the British Empire. As long as the British- and Indian-dominated civil service "held the ring," and the British governor maintained sole authority over defense, finance, and the separate administration of the Shan States and the frontier areas in the north of the country, Myanmar politicians were allowed to play the parliamentary game with as much bravado and money as they could muster. The massive peasant revolt known as the Saya San rebellion (1930–32) was the only event prior to the Second World War to raise doubts about the perpetuity of British rule. When the British suppressed that huge outpouring of peasant discontent, they suggested agrarian reforms, but Myanmar nationalists drew very different and much more radical lessons from that violent episode.

Similarly, the University of Yangon, though viewed by the business community and other conservative groups as a hotbed of subversion, enjoyed relative academic freedom, a situation that encouraged its students to debate widely on the ideological and political issues of the day. Their British and Indian teachers watched with a benign tolerance, which was only occasionally challenged by the most vociferous nationalists, as the students organized themselves in the student union and published newspapers critical of their education. The faculty's benign tolerance merely served to increase the radical energies of those Myanmar students who had come from provincial towns to what was in many ways an alien city, an alien university, and an alien existence. The education offered to them they described as a "slave" education, designed to entrap their spirits rather than liberate their minds and their country. Journal Kyaw U Chit Maung's reference to G. E. Harvey's widely read *History of Burma*[1] reflected this situation. Harvey claimed that the British had "saved Burma," evoking the question, "saved the colony from what and for whom?" The answer was sought not in the classroom but in the books and magazines of British, Indian, and Burmese left-wing writers, which were readily available and

[1] G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma: From the Earliest Times to 10 March 1824, the Beginning of the English Conquest* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1925).

which intellectuals like U Chit Maung knew well. The 1930s was an ideological age all the world over, and Myanmar fully shared in its debates.

Imagine the impression on a late adolescent who, having gained admission to his country's most prestigious educational institution, discovered that most of his or her teachers were Indians or British. To suffer the apparent disdain of sophisticated urbanites might be difficult for a country lad or lass to bear. To be told that one's ancestors were incapable of preserving their own civilization without foreign rule must have been unbearable. Imagine the anger that would rise in one when most of the officials one dealt with on a daily basis in one's capital city were foreigners. Even the language spoken in its major market city was foreign—Hindi rather than Burmese—and the language of government was foreign—English, not Burmese. In the 1930s, half of Yangon's population was composed of Hindus and Muslims of South Asian descent, now called Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis, who had come to live among the Theravada Buddhists of Myanmar. Yangon at that time was the second busiest port in the world for immigration, as thousands of South Asians entered and left the colony each year, with increasing numbers settling permanently and competing for the jobs and land that the indigenous population considered theirs. The resulting economic and social competition fueled the racial and religious riots that are described so graphically in *Thu-lo Lu*.

The mixture of student radicalism, feeding on nationalist and Marxist publications, and racial conflict, fueled by religious discord and economic competition, provided a volatile source of support for politicians playing the parliamentary game that the British declared open to all who agreed to stay within the rules. The two politicians who dominated that game until the Japanese declared it over in 1942 were Dr. Ba Maw and U Saw. These two rivals, and their maneuverings, are part of the backdrop to the early political events that Daw Ma Ma Lay describes U Chit Maung attempting to mastermind and criticize, both in his journalism and in his capacity as a political advisor. The parliament elected Ba Maw the country's first premier in 1937. U Saw, who lacked Ba Maw's intellectual finesse and stylish manners, nevertheless possessed an instinct for grasping a political opportunity, creating a political force, and remaking the balance of power in his own interest. He soon set out to do so.

These two rivals made and broke alliances with nationalist youths such as Thakin Aung San and other leaders of the Yangon University Students' Union and the Do Bama Asi-ayon (We Burmans Association) in order to unseat their rivals and gain power for themselves. When Dr. Ba Maw dominated the parliament, U Saw plotted to bring him down with the assistance of students who despised them both—and made that clear rhetorically—for playing the British parliamentary game and seemingly being their willing stooges. When U Saw strode to power on the backs of the students, and with a little help from his Japanese, Chinese, and Myanmar financial backers, he watched Dr. Ba Maw form an alliance with the students known as the Freedom Bloc. Happy to work with the British whom he had previously denounced so forcefully with Thakin Aung San at his elbow, U Saw, when he reached the top job, embraced the Defense of Burma Rules that the Governor handed him to suppress his political opponents and erstwhile allies, eventually even canceling scheduled parliamentary elections. These events and many others like them took place during the first half of the decade that *Thu-lo Lu* documents.

The second half of that decade commenced with the bombing of Yangon by the Japanese in December 1941 and January 1942. The confidence of the colonial state in

its ability to keep in check the nationalist energies and racial antagonisms was part of the same self-satisfaction that created the complacent belief that there was no possibility that international conflict could disrupt their world. The speed with which the Second World War engulfed Myanmar was not only unexpected but also unprecedented. The British were completely incapable of defending their colony, and thousands of persons, British and South Asians, were forced to flee ignominiously in the first four months of 1942—by sea if lucky, on foot if not—to India. Thousands died along the way. Three years later, in 1945, the British returned to a different country, one in which they could no longer preside with moral and military self-confidence, but where they were instead overwhelmed by the radical nationalism that they had so indifferently ignored in the first half of Daw Ma Ma Lay's and U Chit Maung's exciting decade together.

How did this quick turnabout occur? Again, the story is complex. Before the Japanese invaded British Myanmar, they prepared a means to undermine the British short of war. Primarily this was through providing military training to a small group, eventually thirty individuals, nationalist youths from the larger "leftist" Kodaw Hmaing faction of the Do Bama Asi-ayon and the smaller, anti-socialist Ba Sein faction of the organization. This was done by spiriting individuals such as Thakin Aung San, Thakin Ye Htut, Thakin Hla Pe, Thakin Hla Maung, and Thakin Shu Maung (later Bo Gyoke or General Ne Win) to Hainan Island for specialized training. When the Japanese war in South East Asia proceeded far more easily than expected, and the Japanese decided to take the war to the Indian border, the Thirty Comrades, as they became known, became the nucleus of an indigenous army that was raised on the march from Bangkok into Myanmar via Tanintharyi (Tenasserim) in the first months of 1942. The Tatmadaw, Myanmar's armed forces, were thus born.

Promised independence by their Japanese mentors, the Burma Independence Army (BIA), led by Thakin, then Bo Gyoke Aung San, assumed they had the right to rule. The Japanese thought otherwise, and they soon had to rein in the force they had unleashed by imposing an indigenous government of their choosing on the country. Thakin Tun Oke, one of the Thirty Comrades, was the first to head this imposed government but he was soon replaced by the irrepressible Dr. Ba Maw. Ba Maw's nemesis, U Saw, spent the war in a British prison in Uganda, having been caught promising the Japanese that he would raise his own army to assist them. He had relayed this promise through the Japanese embassy in Lisbon on his way home from a failed mission to London and Washington, DC, during which he had demanded a promise of dominion status for his country when the war was over.

The BIA, soon greatly reduced in size and renamed the Burma National Army (BNA), became a new factor in Myanmar's overt political and institutional life. During this same time, the Communist Party of Burma (BCP) arose, also born in the midst of the defeat of the British and the victory of the Japanese. The BCP, founded in 1939 by Aung San, had several other figures who aspired to lead it with their own ideological and programmatic policies. With Aung San now in charge of the budding Myanmar military, one Communist faction, led by Thakin Than Tun, who served as Minister of Agriculture during the Japanese era, organized the country's restive agrarian population as a potential political force. Than Tun also became Aung San's brother-in-law, the two men marrying sisters in the midst of the Japanese-sponsored interlude when Dr. Ba Maw presided as the Adipati Ashin Mingyi. The other faction was led by the irrepressible Thakin Soe. Soe, the originator of many of the Marxist-cum-Buddhist concepts that formed the heart of Myanmar socialist rhetoric for years

after his political demise, refused to ally himself with the "Fascist Japanese." At the start of the war, he and his followers went underground and began organizing a resistance movement against the Japanese. His group also dispatched Thakin Thein Pe (Myint), U Chit Maung's interlocutor at several points in *Thu-lo Lu*, to India, where he joined up with British military intelligence to lay the groundwork for an eventual temporary alliance between these diverse Myanmar nationalist forces and the British against the Japanese.

After independence came to Myanmar just six years after the Japanese invasion, all of these young men were to be involved in leading one or another of the major political forces of the country's incipient civil war that Daw Ma Ma Lay anticipates in the months prior to U Chit Maung's premature death. In the first half of the 1940s, they were all still in their late twenties and early thirties, having led the Students Union and the Do Bama Asi-ayon in street protests against the British and in support of various older established political figures such as U Saw and Dr. Ba Maw just a few years before. Myanmar's politics was in the midst of a revolution that resulted in the replacement of an older generation of political leaders and thrust remarkably young men into positions of authority for which they admitted they were poorly prepared. The generation they replaced, whose members had collaborated with the British and come to be perceived as largely unworthy of respect in the new nationalist Myanmar, was discarded in the rush to independence. The official and unofficial historiography of Myanmar has tended to reflect this view.

Among the many events that Daw Ma Ma Lay describes in *Thu-lo Lu*, three stand out as deserving fuller consideration. One is the 1938 Revolution, or Ayeidawbon; the second is the move of their family to Bogalay and the arrival of the BIA to the town in the wake of the British withdrawal; the third is the return of the British to Yangon and the maneuverings within the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) that she so ambiguously describes. Each of these events highlights an aspect of history that both fiction and honest memoir of the kind represented by *Thu-lo Lu* are much better at capturing than formal academic analysis would be. Historians and political scientists look for patterns and categories into which political actors can be slotted in order to create a narrative order out of the chaos of events. Official and unofficial hagiography uses this same device to justify praise for one party or individual and condemnation of all others. That heroes lead parties and armies, and villains organize plots and sabotage, is easier to believe if you were not in the midst of the human drama of the kind that rapid political change creates. Journal Kyaw Ma Ma Lay makes it clear that this kind of historical analysis denies the complexity of actual events, and she reminds us of the human factor in any historical occurrence. Friendships and personal interests usually outrank ideologies and policies in conditions where there are no established rules nor clear codes of procedure.

The 1938 Ayeidawbon is recorded in the annals of Myanmar's prewar politics as a somewhat less significant event than either the 1920 Students Strike over the allegedly elitist nature of the Yangon University Act or the 1936 student strike over the expulsion of student journalists Nu and Aung San for refusing to reveal the author of a potentially libelous article in the Student Union magazine critical of the personal behavior of a university teacher. Though few of the future rulers of Myanmar took leading roles in the 1938 Ayeidawbon, it was an important development, as it brought together student nationalists with worker politics in a broad coalition, creating the illusion of being a broad revolutionary force. It was also an object lesson and a model for future student and worker protests into the 1990s. U

Chit Maung was a role model for many political aspirants who viewed him as a smart politician and journalist. *Thu-lo Lu* was on the reading lists for discussion by many of the leftist, usually Communist-affiliated, reading circles that persisted in socialist Myanmar during the 1970s and 1980s. Journal Kyaw U Chit Maung continues to be a role model for young people, many of whom are political aspirants who view him as a sensible politician and journalist.

During the course of 1938, students led by Yangon University Students' Union Chairman Thakin Hla Pe, the future Bo Let Yar, traveled to Yeinanchaung, the heart of the Myanmar oil industry, and joined striking oil field workers in a march on Yangon that terminated at the Shwedagon Pagoda, the center of the country's protest politics. The inability of the government to control the situation led to the eventual rise of U Saw as premier, but the turmoil also led to a split in the Do Bama Asi-ayon just as it replaced the Students' Union at the heart of youthful political organization. Being part of a movement that helped change a government, but did not undermine British control, forced the leaders of the Do Bama Asi-ayon to rethink their political strategies. This lesson gave rise to the conspiratorial politics that resulted in the founding of the Communist Party by Aung San and others in 1939 and the Freedom Block by Dr. Ba Maw and his new youthful allies in 1940, and eventually to the BIA. Ideological positions were of little importance to individuals as they sought allies and strategies for ending colonial rule in whatever role it adopted, benign or not. *Thu-lo Lu* captures some of the fluid alliances to which U Chit Maung's younger associates were drawn and concerning which he advised them.

At the end of the volume, one finds described a similar period of plotting and scheming for position and power in the country's final effort to end the grip of imperialism on Myanmar. That complex period would require a lengthy essay to describe at all adequately or objectively. Allies and associates from prewar and wartime politics now came together in one great national coalition, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), to force out the British. The leaders of the disparate forces that had been born in student and Do Bama Asi-ayon politics and factionalism in the late 1930s and in the formation of the Burma Independence Army and the fissiparous Communist movement during the war years realized that they were on the cusp of independence if only they could remain united against the British.

At the same time, they all also realized that if the AFPFL succeeded in its nationalist quest, some of them would become the nation's first post independence leaders and shapers. Relationships of trust and animosity that had been established, broken, and reestablished in the previous decade of student union and covert politicking now became the basis on which coalitions were built and future positions established. The premature death of Bo Gyoke Aung San, killed by an assassin's bullets just fourteen months after he delivered U Chit Maung's funeral eulogy in April 1946, has elevated him to a position of preeminence in that period that his rivals at the time would not have recognized. Daw Ma Ma Lay only hints at these conflicts, but the hints are clear enough to draw our attention to the intrigues of the period.

The 1938 Ayeidawpon and the 1945–47 AFPFL independence struggle provided dramatic scenes of intrigue and conflict connected to well-known events in Myanmar's political history. The struggle for physical security that occurred in Bogalay during the 1942 invasion, though little known but repeated in towns across the country, better reveals the underlying sociopolitical reality of the times. Here the