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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

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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

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

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### 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 Tabauang, 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<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> The original edition of *Thu-lo Lu* was published in two volumes.