

## Foreword

The Second World War started on different dates and also ended differently; in Europe and East and South-East Asia, but the misery and suffering it brought were the same. In spite of its terrible consequences, the underlying causes of the war are not properly understood by the public, even the generation which actually took part in, or experience the war. With new generations it is even worse.

Among the Myanmar people, there are very few who realize why they had become 'the grass under two fighting buffaloes'. One of the translators, Myanma Athan Kyaw Oo, was a ten-year-old boy when the war came to his town. He shared the misfortunes of war with his local folk, but like most others, he did not understand what was happening or why. Of course, after the war, we learnt some facts from reading, documentary films and from the tales of older folk. We know something about the covert Japanese organization, the Minami, and its role in recruiting and military training of thirty young Myanmar patriots (Thirty Comrades) who believed it was for their independence struggle. Then came the organization of Army (BIA) and BDA, (which later grew into Myanmar's national army), the Myanmar revolt against the Japanese, and with it the formation of AFPFL (the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League), the national vanguard of the revolution, which later led the nation into independence.

The war was widespread, from North-East Asia and China to the whole of South-East Asia, and to some extent to India. It is a really big historical event which every generation should be aware of, perhaps learn lessons.

Fortunately, in 1974, Myanma Athan Kyaw Oo got the opportunity to work for NHK (Radio Japan) in its Myanmar section. While in Japan, he got friends, some of them veterans from Myanmar. He heard from them the stories of Japanese soldiers who fought in Myanmar. He also read articles and books about the Great War. One of the books he read was '*Dai Towa Kyoekin Indo Bama Michi*' (The Road to Myanmar and India in Greater Asia Co-prosperity Sphere) by K. Moriyama, Kobayashi and S. Kurisaki.

Myanma Athan Kyaw Oo, with the collaboration of H. Tanabe, a colleague, translated the book into Myanmar language. The manuscript

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has been completed since 1977, but for various reasons, known and unknown, it has not been published after two decades.

U Kyaw Oo urged his friend Tin Hlaing to take up the task of translating it into English. Tin Hlaing put in the effort, with U Kyaw Oo inspiring him. The result is this book, which has gone through a two-step translation: from Japanese to Myanmar by Myanma Athan Kyaw Oo and H. Tanabe, and then from Myanmar to English by Tin Hlaing.

The translators have a number of people to whom they would like to express their thanks.

First, Myanma Athan Kyaw Oo wishes to thank many friends who attracted his attention to the Great War. Most deserving of his thanks are K. Moriyama, Kobayashi and S. Kurisaki, authors of the original Japanese book; and he also expresses his thanks to co-translator H. Tanabe. Mrs. Tanabe provided hospitality and much assistance when they were doing the translation, and Myanma Athan Kyaw Oo records his thanks to her.

Both Myanma Athan Kyaw Oo and Tin Hlaing recognize the encouragement and assistance of their wives: Daw May May Nyunt, U Kyaw Oo's wife (and a retired Senior Teacher), produced a neat handwritten copy of the Myanmar translation. Daw Mya Mya Swe, Tin Hlaing's wife (and retired Lecturer in Botany) played the role of whip cum commentator. Here, we again record our thanks for their involvement.

Myanma Athan Kyaw Oo  
Tin Hlaing

Yangon, July 24, 2005.

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## Note about the spelling of names

Around 1990, the Government of the Union of Myanmar prescribed the use of more appropriate English spellings of Myanmar place names.

New spellings of place names, as well as people, have been adopted these days by many nations. We have found Chinese names have changed: Peking is now Beijing; Mao Tse Tong is now spelt Mao Ze Dong. In India, Bombay has become Mumbai; Calcutta and Madras are respectively Kolkutta and Chennai. It is known that in Singapore there are suggestions to re-name roads named after minor British officials.

In this book, we are compelled to adopt the currently prescribed spellings of place names, knowingly allowing for discrepancies from names that are well known in history. The translators assume that readers would understand, or would take care to understand, any discrepancy of a name from its historical context.

Tin Hlaing