

# Myanmar Literature Project

မြန်မာစာပေစီမံကိန်း

Hans-Bernd Zöllner (ed.)

Working Paper No. 10:7

Material on Mogyo, *José Rizal*

Passauer Beiträge zur Südostasienkunde

Working Papers

ISSN 1435-5310

Alle Rechte © Lehrstuhl für Südostasienkunde, Universität Passau 2007

Druck: Universität Passau

Printed in Germany

## **Contents**

About the Contributors.....	3
<b>I. INTRODUCTION (Hans-Bernd Zöllner) .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Presenting a Tragic Asian Hero .....	5
Burmese Days - Martyrs' Days .....	6
Reflections and Questions .....	9
About this Volume .....	13
<b>II. MATERIAL ON MOGYO, JOSE RIZAL .....</b>	<b>14</b>
1. Kyaw Hoe, Bibliographical Information (Translation: Khin Maung Saw).....	14
2. Moe Hein Zaw: Book Review (Translation: Aung Kyaw Moe).....	16
Chapter (1).....	16
Chapter (2): The Student Life .....	17
Chapter (3): The Overseas Education .....	18
Chapter (4): Learning Higher Education.....	19
Chapter (5): Noli Me Tangere .....	21
Chapter (6): A Melancholic Love Story.....	23
Chapter (7): Second Expatriation .....	23
Chapter (8): The Reign of Greed.....	25
Chapter (9): A Struggle between Violence and Peace .....	26
Chapter (10) How Rizal Let the World Know about the Philippines .....	26
Chapter (11): The Blistering Lava from the Volcano .....	27
Chapter (12): Coming Back to Sacrifice His Life.....	29
Chapter (13): The Execution .....	30
Review.....	32
2.1 Commentary to Moe Hein Zaw's Report by Heinrich Geiger .....	33
3. Daw Khin Hla Myint: Book Review on <i>José Rizal</i> (Translation and Commentaries: Khin Maung Saw) .....	35
Chapter (1).....	35
Chapter (2).....	37
Chapter (3).....	39
Chapter (4).....	40

Chapter (5).....	41
Chapter (6).....	44
Chapter (7).....	46
Chapter (8).....	47
Chapter (9).....	48
Chapter (10).....	49
Chapter (11).....	50
Chapter (12).....	52
Chapter (13).....	53
Analysis:.....	55
4. U Thet Tun: Report on the Translation of the Biography of José Rizal .....	56
4.1. Commentary on the report by U Thet Tun by Dietrich Schilling .....	59
5. <i>Nagani News</i> , Book Review by Ye Ye Tauk (Translation: Khin Maung Saw) .....	60
6. <i>Nagani News</i> , My Last Farewell (Translation: Khin Maung Saw) .....	62
7. Ba Choe, U Wizara.....	70
8. Khin Maung Saw, A Comparative Study of Rizal’s Biography, English Version written by Russell & Rodriguez and the Burmese Version written by Moe Gyo (U Ohn Khin) .....	72
<b>III. Appendices .....</b>	<b>86</b>
SHORT INFORMATION on the MAKING of the BOOK REPORTS .....	86
INFORMATION about COMMENTARIES on BOOK REPORTS .....	88

## About the Contributors

**Kyaw Hoe** studied Library Science at Yangon University and got his MA degree with a work on the Nagani Book Club. He later retired from the library field and became a merchant.

**Khin Maung Saw** was born in 1946 in Yamethin, Central Burma and grew up in Rangoon as the third child of four of U Saw Maung (Superintendent of jail) and Daw Khin Khin (Highschool Teacher). His parents were Buddhist Arakanese (Rakhaings). He went to St. John's Diocesan Boys' School in Rangoon, studied at the University of Rangoon and obtained the degree of Bachelor of Science in 1965. He obtained the Diplomas in German Language (Ordinary and Advanced Levels) in 1966 and 1967 from the Institute of Foreign Languages, Rangoon. He was selected as a Government State Scholar to the then German Democratic Republic in October, 1968, finished Master of Science degree (Diploma) in October 1972. After that he went back to Burma and was appointed as the Head of Department, Quality Control, first in the People's Porcelain Factory in Tharawaddy and later in the People's Glass factory in Thanlyin. In the meantime, he worked as part time lecturer at the Rangoon Institute of Technology. Later, he resigned from the government post and worked as a senior teacher at the International High School in Rangoon. In 1981 he was offered a job from the former G.D.R to work as a lecturer in the Burmese Department, Southeast Asian Institute, Humboldt University, Berlin. He worked there until 1994. Past that, he worked as a Scholar in Residence, Southeast Asian Studies, Ohio University, Ohio, U.S.A, from 1994 to 1996 to guide a paper "A Comparative Study between the Burmese and Indonesian Armies, from the National Liberation Army to the Ruling Class". Later, he was sent by the German Development Service to Uganda (6 years) and after that to Papua New Guinea (3 years). - He is married to a Filipina, Erlinda Saw *nee* Abad since 1984, who used to work as a lecturer in the Philippines Studies at the Humboldt University, Berlin. While he was writing the papers on Dr. Jose Rizal, the National Hero of the Philippines, he received a good assistance from his wife.

**Moe Hein Zaw** received his B.A and M.A in Myanmar Language from Yangon University and is working on his Ph.D. Thesis. He is working as an instructor for Burmese language.

**Heinrich Geiger** is Head of the Asia Department of the Catholic Academic Exchange Service (KAAD) and has edited several publications on Asia.

**Khin Hla Myint** is a retired school teacher living in Yangon.

**Wunnakyawhtin U Thet Tun** was born in 1926 in Yangon and educated in Burma, Japan and England and gained a B.A. from the University of Yangon, and a B.Sc. in Economics from the University of London. He worked 25 years in the Ministry of

Planning. After 19 years of service at the head of the Ministry's Central Statistical and Economics Department, he was named Ambassador to France in 1975 with concurrent accreditation to Switzerland and Spain. In 1979 he was invited to the Unesco Secretariat as head of its Asia and Pacific division. Retiring in 1986, he currently lives in Yangon serving as director of the Tun Foundation Bank, a part-time member of the Myanmar Historical Commission, and President of the Japan Alumni of Myanmar Association. - U Thet Tun has written numerous books and in 1998 won the National Literary Prize.

**Dietrich Schilling** born in 1945, studied international literature in Hamburg and London. Since 1973 he has worked as an editor at the Norddeutscher Rundfunk (North German Broadcasting) in Hamburg. His special fields of interest are literature, international development policy, and (natural) sciences. He has undertaken extended journeys to Southeast-Asia including Burma. He also published a book on the advantage and disadvantage of international development projects ("Wer brennt, kann entzünden. Neue Wege zum Engagement mit dem Süden". Peter Hammer Verlag, 1996).

**Georg Noack**, born 1977 in Hannover (Germany) studied at Hamburg University and Humboldt University Berlin (South-East Asian studies, ethnology) specialising himself in Burma studies. He perfected his language skills in Myanmar and in 2005 received his MA from the Humboldt University with a thesis on the exposition of gender in Burmese novels. He is now working on his Ph.D.

## I. INTRODUCTION (Hans-Bernd Zöllner)

### **Presenting a Tragic Asian Hero**

Nagani started its series of publications with a biography of U Lun (a) Thakin Kodaw Hmine.<sup>1</sup> Only one other life story of a Burmese person was later published - and this was a special case, a book on Sao Mon Hla, the Shan princess who became the wife of King Anawratha of Bagan. It can be assumed that this latter book served the special purpose of Nagani's goal of promoting unity between the races of Burma.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the biography of the leading Burman author tried to connect the book club with Burma's literary as well as nationalist traditions.

The book introduced here is the first in a long series of biographies published by Nagani and its 'sister enterprise', Tun Aye's Burma Publishing House. They connected the Burmese struggle for independence with international developments. A list of the personalities who were portrayed demonstrates the broad horizon, both geographically and historically, which the publishers deemed proper to illuminate the fate of their country.

Listed in chronological order biographies on the following "great men" were published<sup>3</sup>: José Rizal - May 1938; Atatürk - February 1939; Lenin - April 1939; Asoka - August 1939; De Valera - September 1939; Lincoln - November 1939; Napoleon - October 1940 (MLP); Roger Casement - Beginning of 1941. Taking into account the fact that one of the first published Nagani books dealt with the writings of the Chinese national leader Sun Yat Sen, one can see a pattern of widening concentric circles starting in Asian countries close to the current revolutionary situation of Burma and extending in space and time to Europe, America, and even earlier historical periods.

There were many other books on the lives of other men, and some women as well. Most of them are presented as positive models<sup>4</sup> and there is a focus on participants in the Irish independence struggle. But José Rizal and the other abovementioned celebrities excels because of the aura of perfection evident both through their achievements and, in Rizal's case, their tragic fate. Rizal was a perfect role model because he excelled in so many arts and sciences and at the same time sacrificed his life for the sake of his country and his people. Through his achievements as a polymath, he embodied what Nagani tried to promote in the field of intellectual and literary

---

<sup>1</sup> See Working Paper 2 of this series.

<sup>2</sup> The book on the Shan princess was published in November 1940. Another book from the same author, Ohn Myint, on "Our Shan State", was also published.

<sup>3</sup> BPH stands for Tun Aye's Burma Publishing House.

<sup>4</sup> One exception to the rule is a book published in October 1939 entitled "Who is Wrong — Hitler or Chamberlain?".

education. As a fighter for justice and freedom he personified absolute personal commitment to his aims and ideals. In this regard, his life story fitted particularly well into nationalist fever in Burma during the 1930s later.

### **Burmese Days - Martyrs' Days**

José Rizal suffered the fate of a martyr. He was tried before a Spanish court-martial for rebellion, sentenced to death and executed on December 30, 1896 at the age of 35. Rizal had never been a political activist in the narrow sense of the word. He was what would be called today a social activist and reformer. The organisation he founded in 1892, *La Liga Filipina*, was a very civic society quite different from the *Dobama Asiayone* which at the time of the publication of Rizal's biography in early 1938 had started heavy agitation against the British administration including organizing a strike of workers in the country's oil industry. These events were closely monitored by the Nagani News. The issue of this periodical in which the biography of Rizal was announced<sup>1</sup> contained one article by Thakin Lay Maung, back then president of the organisation, and an article claiming that the "crisis" in the oilfields in Upper Burma was a world crisis.<sup>2</sup>

It was this belief in the global crisis of colonialism, the forces of capitalism which supported it and the firm conviction of being a victim of unjust and harsh suppression which predominantly connected the Nagani editors with Rizal's story. To fight suppression, it was necessary to have sacrifice - in other words, the readiness to become a martyr. This keenness for enduring the consequences of fighting oppression can be regarded as a golden thread running through Burmese and Myanmar history since the first attempts to strive for Burmese self-determination, beyond the loss of the country's sovereignty, up to the present day.

The first public manifestation of this attitude is connected with Burma's National Day, which commemorates the beginning of the students' strike of 1920. Student leader Ko Ba U expressed the determination to fight the authorities on the issue of the planned University Act in a speech to his fellow students on the slopes of the Shwedagon Pagoda:

Either the authorities yield or we die fighting. I see by your faces that everyone wants to fight to the last. Are we determined? (Cries of "Yes".) Then stand by one another and win together!<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 60-61.

<sup>2</sup> See vol. 1 of this series.

<sup>3</sup> The English text of the speech is taken from a MA thesis on the Burmese students' movement between 1920 and 1940 submitted at Rangoon University by Aye Kyaw in 1963 and reprinted in Hans-Bernd Zöllner (2000) *Birma zwischen "Unabhängigkeit Zuerst — Unabhängigkeit Zuletzt". Birmas Unabhängigkeitsbewegungen und ihre Sicht der zeitgenössischen Welt am Beispiel der birmanisch-deutschen Beziehungen zwischen 1920 und 1948*. Hamburg, Lit: 505-507.

This dramatic expression is rooted in Buddhist teachings of giving up self-interest.<sup>1</sup> ThisThe religious connotation is underlined by the fact that before the strike some students took an oath on the Shwedagon Pagoda.<sup>2</sup> The combining of Buddhist background with national agitation is underlined by the influence of U Ottama and other monks on the Burmese nationalist movements.<sup>3</sup> U Ottama would-be the first to suffer from the consequences of his attacks on the Government. He was imprisoned for his seditious speeches in June, 1921, for the first time, causing laypeople as well as monks to increase their nationalistic activities. One of the monks, U Wisara, died in prison on September 19, 1929, after a hunger strike lasting 166 days.

U Wisara became known as the first martyr (*azani*, derived from a Pali word) of the Burmese struggle for independence.<sup>4</sup> Others followed in the turbulent events of 1938 and 1939. At a demonstration before Government House on December 22, 1938, a student named Aung Gyaw was beaten by the police. Three days later he died. On February 10, the police opened fire on participants in demonstrations in Mandalay which were coordinated by a Sangha organisation. 17 people died, among them 7 monks.

From that time on, evoking the memory of the martyrs became an integrated part of the fight against the British and their Burmese allies - whether real or alleged. From 1940 onwards *arzani* days were proclaimed to commemorate Aung Gyaw's and the Mandalay victims' deaths.<sup>5</sup> After Burma was formally granted independence by the Japanese after their conquest of Burma on August 1, 1943, a statue for U Wisara was erected. On October 2<sup>nd</sup> of the same year, the statue was inaugurated. Aung San, the War Minister in the Burmese Government, held a speech praising the monk's "irrepressible spirit, patriotism [and] mind like an immortal jewel". Aung San continued: "I want us to, even if we are the last ones remaining, from today to develop this martyr spirit."<sup>6</sup> Here, Aung San followed a turn of phrase resembling the wording used in Ba U's 1920 speech.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Burmese word for "sacrifice" means literally "to throw away self-interest".

<sup>2</sup> Aye Kyaw (1993) *The Voice of Young Burma*. Ithaca, Cornell University. In the 1980s, a stele was erected on the Shwedagon platform documenting this event.

<sup>3</sup> For details see Maung Maung (1980) *From Sangha to Laity. Nationalist Movements of Burma 1920-1940*. New Delhi, Manoha: 14-32.

<sup>4</sup> See the assessment of Ba Choe below, p. 71-72.

<sup>5</sup> Maung Maung 1980: 202.

<sup>6</sup> Quotations taken from Gustaaf Houtman (1999) *Mental Culture in Burmese Crisis Politics. Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League of Democracy*. Tokyo, Institute for the Study of Language & Cultures of Asia and Africa: 250.

Aung San's speech of 1943 was not the only one in which he indirectly hinted at his own fate.<sup>1</sup> After his assassination on July 18, 1947, together with eight other men who had assembled in the building outside of which student Aung Gyaw was fatally wounded, he was identified as an *azani* who had sacrificed his life for the whole nation.<sup>2</sup> In retrospect, his death was seen as the inevitable fate of a Buddhist saint. His death was separated from the freedom struggle. At the time of his death, Aung San had negotiated the conditions of independence with the British and had also established himself as the country's paramount leader. The men who assassinated him and the members of his cabinet acted on the order of a Burmese political rival.

July 19 was declared a public holiday and named Martyr's Day (*azani ne*). Through his death as a martyr, Aung San was elevated into the realm of modern Burma's mythology. This myth influenced the history of independent Burma heavily. The holiday commemorating the death of the country's "foremost martyr" reminded the people of his legacy, which could be interpreted in different ways. Because the course of Burma's independence never developed into a success story, this inheritance could be understood as a still unfulfilled promise which calls for deliverance.

This became very clearly apparent when Aung San's daughter, Suu Kyi, entered the political scene during the crisis of 1988. In her first great public speech under a large picture of her father at the Shwedagon Pagoda, she dubbed the fight of the people against the government "the second struggle for independence".<sup>3</sup> In addition, she praised the students for "their willingness to sacrifice their lives" and asked the audience to observe a minute of silence as a sign of respect for those who lost their lives in the demonstrations and "in order to share the merit of their deeds among all of us."<sup>4</sup>

Almost one year later, on July 20, 1989, one day after that year's Martyr Day, Suu Kyi was put under house arrest. Since then, she has developed into a martyr herself, one of the many prisoners who lost their individual freedom because they fought for the freedom of the people. In retrospect, Burmese national days after the first military coup in 1962 are often portrayed as a series of martyrs' days, with the students - and to a lesser extent, the monks - spearheading the

---

<sup>1</sup> Susanne Prager (1998) *Nationalismus als kulturelle Reproduktion. Aung San und die Entstehung des postkolonialen Birma*. Heidelberg, Ph.D.-Dissertation: 326.

<sup>2</sup> Prager 1998: 343-344.

<sup>3</sup> Suu Kyi (1988) „Speech to a Mass Rally at the Shwedagon Pagoda“, in Suu Kyi (1991) *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*. Foreword by Vaclav Havel. Edited with an introduction by Michael Aris. London [u.a.], Penguin Books: 198-204, p-199.

<sup>4</sup> Suu Kyi 1988: 198-199.

struggle for freedom.

Looking back at the book on José Rizal published in Burma, one may regard this as an - anticipation, albeit unintended, of a hidden motif in Burma's history which one may call the "theme of the unfinished cause".

### **Reflections and Questions**

As with other aspects of research into Burma's 20<sup>th</sup> century history, there is a big gap between the obvious significance of the willingness to sacrifice one's life for the well-being of the nation and a scientific reflection on such constituents of Burmese political and public culture. The following deliberations are not meant to make up for this disparity but to point to some issues which need attention. A few words on José Rizal, the hero of Mogyo's book,<sup>1</sup> may be helpful in identifying some of these issues.

a) Mogyo's foreword to the book makes clear why he thinks that the Burmese people should be informed about the hero of his book: "I wish a person like Dr. Jose Rizal should come out soon in our motherland!" Rizal was seen as a role model for Burma, as somebody whose qualities could be helpful in the immediate situation of Burma's struggle for freedom.

Rizal's qualities, as his biography illustrates, consisted in his broad education, his many skills in the fields of arts and sciences, his international outlook and contacts, and his special personality. It was his character which induced him to invest his many talents in the fight for a just Philippine society. As the attitude of devoting one's life to the welfare of the people was prevalent at that time, one may ask if Mogyo was looking for an uncorrupted Burman leader of Rizal's abilities and international experience as well as reputation.

Mogyo thus, implicitly, drew attention to a lack of intellectual, artistic and 'global' competence among those present leaders of the Burmese independence struggle who could be trusted not to pursue selfish aims. In a way, Rizal personified as an individual what Nagani tried to promote for as many people in Burma as possible: comprehensive knowledge, the means to communicate one's knowledge and convictions to others, and leading by example.

This observation leads to the question of how the relationship between functional and personal qualifications was conceptualised and put into practice in independent Burma. Looking at Rizal as well as at the Burmese martyrs, one is inclined to assume that integrity of-character was regarded as the most important qualification to become a leader. This personal integrity bestowed

---

<sup>1</sup> For the authorship of the book, see Maung Zeya's article in Working Paper 1.1 (p. 67-69). According to Zeya's research, it was Thakin Ba Thaung who wrote the book.

a special quality upon the skills of the leader in the sense that they became instruments benefiting “the people” and not just the bearer of the talents. In other words, a good leader had to integrate his own abilities because only such a person could integrate and unite the various skills and interests of the people. As a physician, an artist and a writer, Rizal was just such an ideal person. There are some indications that this qualification of a national leader enforced an already existing tradition which continued into independent Burma. Aung San was praised mainly for his personal integrity and dedication towards the national cause.<sup>1</sup> Nu portrayed himself in his memoirs as a “Nationalist and Buddhist” but - as Prime Minister - an “Amateur in Office”.<sup>2</sup> Ne Win was accused for his low morals as well as his failure in the University. A recent publication on Razak, who was assassinated together with Aung San, introduced him as “...a selfless patriot, a visionary of the future needs of the country and a dedicated teacher of repute who made the ultimate sacrifice together with Bogoyoke Aung San.”<sup>3</sup> Note that his qualification as a teacher was mentioned last.

These observations need expansion and differentiation and should be supplemented by other questions like the relationship between the qualifications of a political leader and the expectations of his assistants, such as civil servants.

b) Another related question of some importance for the analysis of Burmese political culture throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century until today is the fact that the hero of the book under review here was no politician in the narrow sense of the word. The association he founded in 1892, *La Liga Filipina*, was not a party, but a self-help organisation which aimed at uplifting the educational and social standards of the Filipinos amid the ongoing suppression of indigenous culture by the Spanish, especially the majority of the Spanish clergy. Under Rizal’s leadership, the organisation did not advocate fighting Spain politically and violently as the *Katipunan* founded by Bonifacio after Rizal’s arrest and the fracturing of the League.

The history of Rizal’s organisation deserves some attention since it can be linked to the situation in Burma in various ways. The first genuinely Burmese movement which developed under British colonial rule, the Young Men’s Buddhist Association (YMBA), was meant to improve the life of the Burmese Buddhists by helping them to preserve their religious and cultural heritage

---

<sup>1</sup> See the contributions on the national hero in (Dr.) Maung Maung (ed.) (1962). *Aung San of Burma*. The Hague: Nijhoff.

<sup>2</sup> Nu (1975) *U Nu. Saturday’s Son*. Translated by U Law Yone. Edited by U Kyaw Win. New Haven and London, Yale University Press: Contents.

<sup>3</sup> Nyi Nyi (2007) “Sayagyi U Razak. A Patriot, a Visionary & a Dedicated Teacher.” In: *U Razak. A Teacher, a Leader, a Martyr* (2007). Bangkok, O.S. Printing House: 7.

and to modernise it. It thus can be compared to Rizal's League. As we know, the YMBA developed into the General Council of Burmese Associations (GCBA) which split into different branches. One major reason for these splits were the different reactions to the British introduction of elements of parliamentary democracy. This kind of politics was widely regarded as attracting the greed and lust of power of Burmese politicians and was thus rejected by the nationalists. The symbol of "politics" in this sense was the constitution which separated Burma from India and was inaugurated in early 1937. Nationalists vowed to crush this constitution either from inside or outside the new parliament established under the new rules.<sup>1</sup>

The search for a new kind of unselfish yet able leaders was thus connected to the search for a new understanding and practice of politics. The start of the oilfield workers' strike initiated by the *Dobama Asiayone* was an attempt to act politically in a Burmese way. Theoretically, Ba Khaing with his "Political History of Burma"<sup>2</sup> had paved the way for a new understanding of the country's history. Soe's book "Socialism", advertised on the last page of the book on Rizal and published by Nagani shortly afterwards, attempted to explain contemporary politics in terms which could be understood by Burmese people accustomed to Buddhist terminology. Almost two years later, Aung San in his – unfinished - essay on "Many Kinds of Politics" quoted Soe and equated Marxist dialectics with the Buddhist law of cause and effect thus interpreting "politics" in a scientific as well as "Burmese" way.<sup>3</sup>

Eventually, a special interpretation presented by Aung San's daughter in her "maiden speech" at the Shwedagon Pagoda on August 26, 1988 shall be quoted:

Another thing which some people have been saying is that I know nothing of Burmese politics. The trouble is that I know too much. My family knows best how complicated and tricky Burmese politics can be and how my father had to suffer on this account. He expended much mental and physical effort in the cause of Burma's politics without personal gain. That is why my father said that once Burma's independence was gained he would not want to take part in the kind of power politics that would follow.<sup>4</sup>

Here, "politics" are a synonym for "dirty politics" which might be considered necessary, but which should be abandoned by selfless people not striving for their personal gain. One can draw

---

<sup>1</sup> For details see Maung Maung 1980: 119-140.

<sup>2</sup> See Working Paper 10:5 of this series.

<sup>3</sup> Aung San (1940) "Many Kinds of Politics." in: Mya Han (comp.) (2000) *The Writings of General Aung San*. Original Myanmar Text Translated into English by Retired Ambassador Thet Tun. Yangon, Universities Historical Research Centre: 50-61.

<sup>4</sup> Suu Kyi 1988: 199.

the conclusion that José Rizal, Aung San and Suu Kyi are personifications of a different kind of politics. In the wake of Burma's political experiences following independence, it may be asked if there have been evaluations, modifications of or alternatives to this concept in Burma/Myanmar.

c) Finally, a question shall be asked with regard to the methodological transfer of José Rizal's life and impact into the Burmese context. The tragic Philippine hero lived in a different time and in a different cultural and political environment than that of the Burmese freedom fighters shortly before World War II.

Just a few of the main differences shall be mentioned: At the time of Rizal's death in 1898, the Philippines had been a Spanish colony for some 300 years. At least nominally, most of the population had accepted the Christian religion in its Roman Catholic version. Rizal himself had studied in Spain and acquainted himself with the spirit and the arts of Western culture. He criticised the Spanish rule from within using basic human values inherent in Christianity to expose the suppression of the native Tagalogs. The novels "Noli me tangere" - the title is taken from the Bible, and compares the treatment of indigenous people in the Philippines to that of lepers in Jesus' time - and "El Filibusterismo", which carried his criticism, were written in Spanish. These were indicated by the Spanish authorities mainly because they exposed the misconduct of the Catholic friars in the Philippines.

Compared with Spanish rule in Rizal's home country, British colonialism in Burma was liberal, as the publication of the book on Rizal by Nagani certifies. But the author of the book stresses the similarities between what happened in the Philippines and in Burma.<sup>1</sup> This is in line with the aims of Nagani to promote the spirit of independence, he suggested that the British were as illiberal and cruel as the Spanish, who deliberately killed a man as virtuous as Rizal.

The question is whether this interpretation - omitting the differences in time and political context, which can be explained by the book's purpose - was unique, or represents a tradition in the Burmese reception of texts. This leads to the broader question of hermeneutics in Burmese text interpretation.

Another question is the history of the reception of Rizal's life in different segments of Burmese society after the war. There is evidence that young Burmese poets of the 1970s admired him, and one writer took two syllables of his name as his pen name, calling himself Jo Zaw.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> For details, see Khin Maung Saw's comparison of the book and the English source used to write it (below, part II, 6).

<sup>2</sup> Information from Ma Thanegi.

### **About this Volume**

As a first look at the contents of this working paper shows, this volume owes a lot to the work of U Khin Maung Saw. He has not only translated some material related to the book under review here, but provided many critical commentaries on the texts, and thereby contributed to one of the main aims of these papers, namely, to promote a critical discussion on Burmese literature vis à vis the rest of the world. This applies particularly to Khin Maung Saw's comparison of the account of Rizal's life given by Mogyo and the English book written by Russell & Rodriguez in 1923 which served as the model for the Burmese version.

U Khin Maung Saw's contributions can be regarded as a spot of good fortune, because as a Burmese who lived in Germany and other countries for many years and who is married to a Filipina, he is able to view the subject of this volume from different perspectives. The reviews of the book written by people living in Myanmar add to this diversity. Each writer represents a different generation. Maung Moe Hein Zaw is still a young scholar, Daw Khin Hla Myint (his mother) is a retired schoolteacher and U Thet Tun is a former Ambassador and a senior member of the Myanmar Historical Commission who still remembers having read the book when he was young. The two commentaries from German readers are written by two men who are very much interested in Myanmar affairs.

I would like to thank all contributors and hope that this paper may be useful and induce further discussion.

Hamburg, February 2008 (last update)

## II. MATERIAL ON MOGYO, JOSE RIZAL

### 1. Kyaw Hoe, Bibliographical Information<sup>1</sup>

Translated from his Nagani Bibliography, pp. 20-21 by Khin Maung Saw

Rangoon, Nagani, 1938, 05, 288 Pages with Photos.<sup>2</sup>

This book was translated by U Ohn Khin with penname Moe Gyo. He was well known as 'Hiking' or 'Going on Foot'<sup>3</sup> U Ohn Khin at that time. He was a leading member of the Nagani Book Club. The Foreword of this book was entitled : "I repay my debts" and started with the sentence: "To my motherland and my dear compatriots of Burma, you are really my benefactors because I was born, grew up and educated on your soil!"

Furthermore, he wrote: "My compatriots, people of Burma, may this book be the guideline of your Independence Struggle. May this book become a big search light, as bright as the flames of a big volcano for your way to freedom." "I wish my efforts to translate this book would become the first step of the ladder in your Independence Struggle. I wish a person like Dr. Jose Rizal should come out soon in our motherland!"<sup>4</sup>

This book is an excellent work of U Ohn Khin. The Philippines should be considered as a neighbour of Burma. Dr. Jose Rizal's struggle for his nation to be set free from the Yoke of The Spaniards was great, and made him an Icon for the Burmese people. Because of U Ohn Khin's book, Dr. Rizal became a popular hero for almost all of the Burmese youths too. I dare to say that, in the 1930's almost every Burmese youth knew Dr. Jose Rizal. Even today (in Burma)

---

<sup>1</sup> The footnotes are from the translator, U Khin Maung Saw.

<sup>2</sup> There are two pictures, both taken from the book of Charles Edward Russell and E.B. Rodriguez (1923) *The Hero of the Filipinos. The Story of José Rizal, Poet, Patriot and Martyr*. New York and London, The Century Co. From the fourteen photos of the English book, two can be found in the Burmese version, a portrait of Rizal and the Rizal Monument in Manila.

<sup>3</sup> Most probably U Ohn Khin did not use public transport whenever he came to office or whenever he visited friends. The patron of almost all Nagani writers, Sayagyi Thakin Kodaw Hmaing was also well known for not using public transports. While he was working as a professor at the National College, he came to the college and returned back home by walking about 4 miles each way.

<sup>4</sup> Hence, it is very clear that U Ohn Khin intended to enchant the people of Burma, then a British Colony, to imitate Dr. Jose Rizal as an ideal person, to follow his example by sacrificing his own life for the liberation of the motherland from a foreign ruler.

there are stories about Dr. Rizal written by many authors. In Encyclopaedia Britannica<sup>1</sup>, under the title Dr. Jose Rizal, the publishers included a picture of Dr. Rizal standing bravely in front of the firing squad.

U Ohn Khin's book has 13 chapters and there is picture of the Filipino People saluting Jose Rizal's Memorial Monument on 30<sup>th</sup> December, the Rizal Day. On the back cover of this book there is an advertisement for a book called "Socialism, The Ism of the Poor" written by Thakin Soe, one of the Executive Committee Members of the Nagani Book Club. U Ohn Khin's book was published in May 13, 1938 and the number of books published in the First Edition was 3050.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in the early 1950's by The Burma Translation Society, patronized by the former Nagani Author U Nu, the then Prime Minister of Burma.

## **2. Moe Hein Zaw: Book Review of Mogyoe, *José Rizal***

Translated by Aung Kyaw Moe

The author of this book is U Ohn Khin whose pseudonym is Moe Gyoe. He was the Secretary of Nagani Book Club. There is no biography of the author in the book. U Ohn Khin is the second husband of Dagon Khin Khin Lay, a female writer.

### **Chapter (1)**

In the first chapter (1) of the book “José Rizal“, the geographical location of the Philippines is mentioned as well as her relationship to neighbouring countries. The book describes how Filipinos began to revolt against the ruthless Spanish Government, which had executed three innocent (Catholic) monks along with the other convicted rebels in the Baganvaran Killing Field. This is based on an accusation that the people were involved with the Cavite Rebellion which happened in 1872. Among those who were killed, Father Mariano Gomez, 85, a man of high spirituality and pure conduct who was highly respected by the people. The date on which these monks were executed, the 28th of February 1872, became a day of venerable memory for the Filipinos. The native poets composed the poetic eulogies for the Filipinos who died by the hands of Spanish Colonialists. The Spanish Government looked down upon the native Filipinos and oppressed them without any mercy, but the Spanish Colonialists were frightened when the oppressed Filipinos launched an organized rebellion against their foreign invaders, and punished them severely.

Francisco Mercado and his wife ( the parents of José Rizal), were also among the people who were tortured by the Spanish rulers. The Spanish Officers put Mercado’s wife on trial by conspiratorial incrimination as she had acted rough and rude to them. They forced her to go on the 20 miles journey to Santa Cruz by foot where she had to defend her case, but the judge physically punished some people and guards who offered her shelter and kind treatment on her long journey. She was imprisoned for two years, and her final release was requested by her daughter, to the Spanish Viceroy who came to Kalamba city. Her daughter was in the Dancing Team which welcomed the Viceroy, who was really moved by the girl’s extraordinary elegance and beauty. He offered her a reward, so she requested for her mother’s release from the prison.

The Mercados had 11 children and José Rizal was the 7th child. Rizal attended his school in Manila. Since he was very young, Rizal had witnessed his parents and other compatriots tortured and bullied by the Spanish Government which really upset and angered him. Accordingly, a strong sense of yearning and aspiration to be free and independent shined forth in his mind at that time. This Chapter includes facts about the notoriety of Spanish Government which ill-treated the Filipinos and hampered the young Filipinos from having access to the higher education. The tyrannical and repulsive ruling of the Spanish Government and rich Friars ignited the fiery temper of Filipinos, and it is said that José Rizal represented as a National Hero who could lead them on the way to liberation.

### **Chapter (2): The Student Life**

Chapter two (2) describes the childhood of José Rizal. Rizal was able to memorize the Spanish alphabet at 3, and he showed an amazing promise, like reading the Spanish Translation of the Vulgata Bible, which was taught to him by his mother when he was only 5 years old. As his mother was a Manila College Graduate, she was able to teach him. The classics and also how to compose poems. He was not only familiar with his native language, Tagalog, but also with the language of their rulers, i.e., Spanish. He enjoyed the sight of moths dying in the flame as his mother told him the proverbial story about “how moths die if they fly too close to a naked flame“. This story of his younger days was evoked whenever he faced the twists and turns of adult life and he felt likened him to the moths.

José Rizal was born on 19<sup>th</sup> of June, 1861. He had matured qualities, as kindness, obedience, willingness to learn, loving books and the habit of reading. His uncle Manuel saw that he was frail and weak in physique, so trained him in physical exercises, and as a result he got stronger and healthier. Before he was five years old, he drew some pictures with pencil, and moulded some figures with mud and wax. His relatives were well-educated people so they encouraged him to pursue education. His mother usually directed all her children to pray in the night time, and she would often relate some old time stories under the moon light. When he was 4, one of his younger sisters died and he shed tears for the first time in his life. He saw the Filipinos people were oppressed by the Spanish Colonialists and he felt in his heart a tremendous longing for the liberation of his people. His father also encouraged him to make progress in his education and taught him some Latin. When he was 9, Rizal was sent to the Biñan School where his uncle Alberto was a boarding student. At first though, he was teased by the other students and beaten

by his teachers. He was taught painting from a painter who lived near his uncle's house. Rizal's brother, Paciano, was sent to San José College where Padre José Burgos, one of those monks executed by the Spanish Authorities in 1872, had been working. His brother was one of the witnesses to the execution, which he later told Rizal about. The young Filipinos including Rizal had repulsive feelings against the Spanish Government. Rizal was sent again to a Jesuit School called Ateneo where he passed the entrance exam at 11. He studied very hard at school but he did not get any award. Although he was not a very sociable boy, he did get a girl friend, but who abandoned him later. Then he made up his mind and utilize his time systematically for the sake of his personal development. He read some Spanish translations of French novels. After that he started to realize that the root cause of suffering and general down-trodden-ness of his native people was the brutal Colonialism of the Spanish Government, and the only way-out of the troublesome situation is to develop Education and Freedom.

### **Chapter (3): The Overseas Education**

In the third chapter it is mentioned that the local schools in the Philippines where Rizal studied his formal education were very bad and incompetent. On 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, 1876, when he was 23, Rizal earned his B.A. degree with highest distinction and he moved from Ateneo School to Santo Tomas University. When he was 18, he won a first Prize in a literature contest for his poem named "To Filipino Youths". He also won a First Prize in a literature contest dedicated to the memory of a famous Spanish Writer Miguel Cervantes, but the selection committee refused to award him because he is not a white man. They conferred that prize to another contestant who was a Spaniard. The Filipino youths were studying hard for their education, but the Spanish teachers were intimidating and subdued them mercilessly. When Rizal came back from the University to his native Calamba Village, he found that his beloved mother was almost blind, but his siblings gave him a warm welcome. If he had pursued painting and sculpture, he might have become a world-renowned artist, as the paintings and sculptures of his younger days were very impressive. . He was very smart at composing poems, and in his student life at Ateneo, he wrote a play called "By the Pasig River". On 10<sup>th</sup> of December, 1880, the play was performed by the students before the public audience of the Philippines. This play reflected openly the brutalities and cruelties of the Spanish Government. After this the Spanish detectives watched him more attentively than the criminals. Rizal was never impressed by the Spanish and whenever there was a street brawl, he took on the side of Filipino students against the Spanish ones. One day, when

he came out of his mother's house, a Spanish Policeman attacked him with a saber, and he was seriously injured. The reason for this attack was that he did not notice that Policeman and did not pay him due respect. He notified the incident to the Spanish Officers concerned, but they did not take any action, and even they mocked him about what had happened. On account of this injustice, he decided to leave his country for Europe, to have a better education, even though he deeply loved his country and his people. However, the Spanish Government did not allow him to get the Passport, so he tried to get it by the name of one of his cousins. His brother, Paciano, and one of his uncles gave him cash to cover his travelling costs to Europe. One of his sisters even contributed by pawning her diamond earrings at a pawnshop. Then he came back to his native village, Calamba, to wait for a ship. When he received a telegraph message saying that the ship had arrived, he went back to Manila, and at the midnight he found himself on board to making *his* way towards adventurous travel to Europe. In this way, the Chapter three ends with Rizal heading to Europe for a better education.

#### **Chapter (4): Learning Higher Education**

The fourth explains how as soon as the Spanish Government learnt that José Rizal had disappeared, the detectives and policemen even suspected that Rizal's parents might have killed him. They made a thorough enquiry about his disappearance but his relatives concealed the truth and they did not disclose about his departure to Europe. The Spanish Government was fearful of the mysterious vanishing of Rizal. Rizal had got to Barcelona, in Spain, by changing ships in Singapore and in France. But no sooner had Rizal left the Philippines, than the Spanish Government started to make trouble for his relatives and friends. In Barcelona, he saw that people were enjoying the rights of free speech and free movement, and he felt so sad about the situation in his homeland where the Spanish Government ruled his people in the iron grip and granted them no basic human rights. At the Madrid University, he studied Medical Science, Philosophy, Literature and Painting, and contemporary languages. He was such a polyglot that he mastered many languages including Catalan, Arabic, German, Sanskrit, and Hebrew. He was a brilliant student, but he kept himself away from sensual indulgences. He had only one big thought: to liberate the Philippines from the chains of Spanish Colonialism. Therefore, he did not have many friends but he lived quite amicably with his closed friends. He used to read the books written in the other languages instead of Spanish books, and that helped him to lessen the chances of having to borrow books from his classmates. At the hotel in the evening, he used to play Chess with his

friends and have discussions about literature. On these occasions, Rizal was drawing caricatures of his friends on the table. He did everything in accordance with a self-prescribed time-table. He studied some French classics, Shakespeare's Plays, the books on International affairs, and the Histories and the Biographies of prominent persons. He often went to the Theatre and some parties if his wallet was fat and full enough. When he came across a book called "The Philippines' Traveler", written by Dr. Jagor<sup>1</sup>, a German philosopher, and some thoughts hovered in his mind, and he had an eagerness to imitate the Americans' struggle for their Independence. He especially loved to read the biographies of American Presidents, who are not from royal families but poor commoners, who had earned their high achievements by their own intellectual quality and dauntless endeavours. These people inspired him so much that he was pondering day and night about the Philippines' Independence. At that time, he joined up the Freemasonry, a secret organization treated as rebels by the Government. Since the money sent by his uncle was not enough to cover his expenses, Rizal worked as a part-time teacher at a Workers' School. He got his Medical Degree in 1844 but he could not afford to apply for his professional registration. Only after another three years was he was capable of registering himself as a full-fledged Medical Doctor. He was thinking of writing a novel about the brutal oppression of the Spanish Government in the Philippines, from which he intended to expose the actual situations in his native country to the international community. This idea came to him by reading a book called "Uncle Tom's Cabin" written by Harriet Beecher Stowe. He learnt that this particular book initiated the abolition of slavery in the United States of America. At first, this novel was intended to be co-authored by the members of the Filipino Club, but later Rizal took the full responsibility to finishing the novel because he did not see any artistic talents in his compatriots. The name of this novel is "Noli Me Tangere". This is not only the best novel in the history of Filipino literature, but also one of the best literary pieces in the history of world literature. He continued to write the novel when he moved from Paris to Heidelberg. At the same time, he was lucky enough to meet some world renowned scientists. He studied Psychology at the Leipzig University, Germany. He rented a cheap room there and studied Anthropology and Entomology. Rizal did not have any hope of seeing his country become independent in his lifetime because he felt that his people were left too far behind in terms of knowledge and education. However he thought that it is better to understand and appreciate the value of independence. This Chapter (4) explains

---

<sup>1</sup> Fedor (Friedrich) Jagors book „Travels in the Philippines“ (in German: Reisen in den Philippinen“) was published 1873. – Jagor (1816-1900) was a traveller, ethnographer and writer. [editor]

about the experiences and difficulties Rizal faced in his European journey towards higher education, and also highlights Rizal's concerns about his country's liberation.

### **Chapter (5): Noli Me Tangere**

The fifth chapter is a summary of Rizal's novel, "Noli Me Tangere". Rizal thought that the Filipinos were not able to obtain their Independence because they lacked a sound educational foundation to maintain it for long. But he had no doubt that his country would be so prosperous one day, if some necessary preconditions are fulfilled. He acknowledged in the novel's preface that in the novel he intended to communicate the importance of education for the Filipinos and to liberate themselves from Spanish colonialism by a peaceful non-violent means. The protagonist of his novel is a young man named Juan Crisostomo Ibarra, who is sent to Europe for his education. When Ibarra is in Europe, his father has a dispute over land ownership with a rich and powerful Friar, Padre Damaso. His father is imprisoned by the authorities. With a broken heart, he dies in prison yearning for his beloved son who is far away. Ibarra knows that his father has passed away but he has no idea how, where, and when his father died. He finds out later that his father died under suspicious circumstances.

Another character is a Filipino lady named Sisa, who has two sons, Basilio and Crispin, who work at a Church as cleaners. One night, when Sisa is waiting for his two Sons and preparing dinner, her notorious husband appears and finishes all food she prepared for her sons. Her husband asks about their Sons and then he leaves. She keeps her own quota of dinner for her two sons. One of her sons, Crispin, is accused of theft, and the abbot of the church tells her that if he fails to return the stolen item he will be beaten to death. That night, there is a thunderstorm, so the two brothers are forced to ring the bell continuously, superstition as claims that tolling the bell can protect their Church from the thunderstorm. The Abbot blames Basilio for not being able to toll the bell rhythmically and locks him in the belfry, and then he takes Crispin to be tried for the crime of theft. Basilio escaped from the imprisonment by cutting the ringing rope and running away into the forest. The Police (Guardia Civil) execute Crispin, and two days later they go to Sisa and blame her for Crispin's theft. Gradually she finds out the truth about her son Crispin, but has gone mad by the time they release her from the prison. She spends her remaining days as a beggar and sleeps in the forest. When Basilio tries to find his mother, Sisa runs away from him because he looks like a stranger to her. Finally, she dies in Basilio's arms.

Ibarra knows how his father died, and his father's body is taken from the grave to be thrown into

a lake, but he can not explain how and to what extent Padre Damaso is involved. But he decides that he will take revenge if he can figure it out. Ibarra is still highly impressed by the Spaniards and he is hoping to find a better system of education that can replace the prevailing one which is so poor in standard and quality. He meets a school teacher and talks to him about education. From this discussion, he learns about the profanity and notoriety of Padre Damaso's behaviour towards teachers and students. Consequently, Ibarra decides to open a private school. An anonymous person warns Ibarra about a secret plan to kill him by dropping a rock onto his head at the school opening ceremony. So he is watchful for a conspiracy. Ibarra cannot identify Padre Damaso as the culprit who killed his father, and who scheming to kill him. Being disappointed for his unsuccessful plan, Padre Damaso starts to disgrace Ibarra's father at dinner. Ibarra punches Damaso and tries to kill him by strangling. Ibarra's anger is pacified by his girlfriend, Maria Ciara, the daughter of Captain Tiago. But as a result, the Friars excommunicate him and Captain Tiago decides to prevent him ever becoming his son-in-law. As a rich man who tries to entice the Friars, Captain Tiago views Ibarra as a hazardous person. Ibarra and Maria Ciara have been close friends since they were very young, and they love each other deeply. They had planned to get married when Ibarra finished his education and came back from Europe. But now Maria's parents force her to marry a Spaniard called Linares, a lotus-eater and a freewheeler. At the same time, the Spanish Viceroy comes to the town where Ibarra is staying. Since the Viceroy and Ibarra's father were old friends, the Viceroy requests a monk, who is an adversary of the Friars, to exonerate Ibarra from the burden of Excommunication. Captain Tiago thinks that it is better to be a father-in-law of a Spaniard than of a Filipino, so he does not agree to let his daughter to get marry Ibarra. A Pilot named Elias informs Ibarra about Maria's sickness. Elias also warns Ibarra about Padre Damaso's wicked plan to kill him by dropping a huge stone. At one time, Ibarra saved Elias from the danger of a terrible crocodile. Elias is a well-educated person who suffers from the brutal oppression of the Spanish Government and wants to create an uprising against the Spanish Government. Elias shares his troubles with Ibarra and they decide together to organize a rebellion. Elias advises Ibarra to flee to the overseas but Ibarra declines the advice and tells his friend that he cannot go out of country without seeing his beloved Maria Ciara. Ibarra explains that the Spanish Government wrongly accused him of rebellion based on a letter written by Maria Ciara to him seven years ago. He asks how the Friars got the letter which was carefully kept by Maria, and she tells him that a Friar named Padre Sibyla, who is unscrupulously wooing her, stole the letter. Padre Sibyla also exposes a hidden truth about the

life of Maria, claiming that she is an illegitimate daughter of Padre Damaso. Ibarra realizes that his lover is still faithful to him and he attempts to run away with Maria. Elias arranges a boat for them. They go up along the Pasig River by the boat but unfortunately the police (Guardia Civil) find them there. Elias is hit by a bullet and falls down into the river. The policemen mistake Elias as Ibarra and they send a report about the death. When Maria Clara hears the news, she decides to become a nun. This is the summary of Rizal's novel, "Noli Me Tangere".

### **Chapter (6): A Melancholic Love Story**

Rizal's novel is based on his own experiences in Europe, for example, as his mother's imprisonment, the two Friars he have met, and his girlfriend Leonora who becomes the character of Maria Clara in his novel. The events in his novel reflect the experiences of Filipinos and are recognized by the people who live in the rest of the world. The love story of Rizal and Leonora are also put as a part of his novel. This chapter shows Rizal's melancholic love story as follows: when he was studying in Spain, the Spanish Government disgraced him and consequently Leonora's mother who was misinformed about Rizal, blamed him and arranged for her daughter to get married to an English Engineer, Henry C. Kispin. She bribed two post office clerks and intercepted the letters between Rizal and his daughter. She forced Leonora to marry Henry by arguing that Rizal did not care about her and did not send the letter. As the day approaches for Leonora's marriage, but one day, a letter from arrives from Rizal when her mother is not at home and then only she realizes the truth that how much Rizal loves her and sent her a lot of letters. But the game is already over and she cannot do anything, so inevitably she gets married to Henry, but with deep regret, and she dies two years later.

### **Chapter (7): Second Expatriation**

In the seventh chapter the author explains that Rizal did not know what happened to his beloved Leonora as he was trying so hard to complete his novel in Berlin. He was having a money crisis at the time, and a little bit depressed about his novel. He economised on food and continued to write the novel. Then he received a letter from a Filipino man named Massimo Viola who is one of his acquaintances in Madrid. Massimo Viola invites Rizal to accompany him in a trip. At first, Rizal was reluctant to accept the offer because he is still struggling with his novel. Viola insists that he tell him problems, and decides to help him. He provided Rizal a financial support to

finish his novel and to publish it. Within a short period, Rizal's first novel had been printed and imported into the Philippines in the disguise of groceries.

As soon as Rizal's novels arrive in the Philippines, the Filipinos read them enthusiastically and but were horrified by the episodes of the novel which describes in great detail the ways the Spanish Government and the Friars oppressed the people. The Spanish Government was really anxious about the calamity and social unrest potentially created by Rizal's novel and they formed an Inspection Committee to peruse the novel. According to the Committee's report, it was found that Rizal's novel has the potential to harm their the religion, culture, and civilization of the Philippines, therefore the Spanish Government issued an order to confiscate all copies of Rizal's novel. But the Filipinos read it in private and distributed copies among their friends and relatives secretly, by evading the watching eyes of the Spanish Detectives. The Spanish Government and the Friars were furious about his novel. Rizal and his friend Viola were touring around Germany, Austria, Italy and France, and they encountered with the renowned scholars and academics. Rizal came back to the Philippines and he got to his native village on 5<sup>th</sup> of August, 1887. He was able to cure his mother's blindness. In the beginning of the year 1888, the Viceroy summoned him to submit a reasonable explanation for his novel. Rizal explained that his novel is not as black as it is painted by the Inspection Committee but the Spanish Government assigned a Detective near Rizal's house to watch all his movements. At that time, there was a problem of Taxation Inequality created by the Government, so Rizal studied the books on Economics and Taxation, and he found out the inequality and unfairness of taxation Disparity between the rich and the poor. He organized the poor tax-payers to sign on a Letter of Appeal submitted to the Spanish Government. In this way, he became a National Hero for the Filipinos. Although the Viceroy was a kind-hearted good man, he could not go against the Friars and accordingly he advised Rizal to leave the Philippines. This was a polite way of making Rizal an exile, but Rizal accepted it by thinking that if he was still in the country, there might be a violent rebellion and the resultant bloodshed and death of his people. By nature he preferred peace to the violence and he hoped that one day his country would be liberated peacefully from the Spanish Colonization. On 28<sup>th</sup> of February, 1888, he left the Philippines for Hong Kong with the idea of going to the United States of America. This Chapter depicts in detail about the after-effects of Rizal's novel, "Noli Me Tangere".

### **Chapter (8): The Reign of Greed**

The eighth chapter, Rizal describes Hong Kong, where he met with some Filipinos of 1872 uprising who fled away from the country. There were noble and educated persons among them. The Spanish Counsellor of Hong Kong encouraged Rizal to stay in Hong Kong, but he moved to Japan where the Spanish Embassy offered him a lucrative translation job. He stayed only one month in Japan and he learned to speak Japanese very well. When he got to the San Francisco by boat, he was not permitted to enter into the city because of cholera disease. He discovered that the Americans are wrathful and unfriendly toward the strangers who came from other parts of the world. He journeyed to England and, in the British Museum he found a book on the Philippines and the Filipinos written by Antonio de Morgar in 1602. It is said that the Filipinos are barbarian race and if Spain did not colonize them, they may live the lives of beasts. But Morgar's book also described how pre-colonial Filipinos were capable of such activities as agriculture, handicraft, trading, navigation and administration. By now Rizal realizes why the Spaniards ignored the high level of culture and civilization of Filipinos and denied their freedom. Then he left London for Paris where he lived at a Filipino painter's home. This painter also suffered from the atrocities done by the Spanish Government. At that time, Rizal's parents and relatives in the Philippines were bullied by the Spanish Government who could not forget what Rizal had done. Rizal's brother Paciano was exiled by the Government and the dead body of Habosa, his sister Lucia's husband, was unearthed from his grave in the churchyard, and buried somewhere else. So the Calamba villagers were feeling panic about the ruthlessness of the Spanish Government. Rizal blamed the Friars by writing an article in a magazine called "La Solidaridad" about the malicious act done to his brother-in-law, Habosa's corpse. There was freedom of expression in Spain whereas everything was under tight control in the Philippines. Rizal was in Belgium writing a second novel called "El Filibusterismo" (The reign of Greed) when his parents and relatives got into trouble. The hateful behaviour of the Spanish Government and the police (Guardia Civil) were openly mentioned in this novel. He claimed that he would write seven novels to arouse the patriotism of his people and he decided he did not want to live any longer if nothing happened to appease them. His novel highlighted that the Filipinos should rely on their own power and not on the Spanish Government, and the novel reminded them not to forget about three Monks fallen in 1872 social unrest.

### **Chapter (9): A Struggle between Violence and Peace**

This chapter starts with that Rizal, who did not want to go outside of Spain, as the people were thinking about him in the wrong way. But Rizal would not see anybody who can love and sacrifice oneself better than he did. The Filipinos who lived in Barcelona were used to arguing about the future of the Philippines. So Rizal wrote some essays and articles that considered what might happen to the Philippines in next 100 years. Since the Spanish Government ruled the Philippines with its sheer military might, it was hopeless for the Filipinos who were armless to achieve liberation. Although they could liberate themselves from the colonization of the Spaniards in a peaceful way, there were other western colonialists waiting for the colonization of the Philippines. But he thought that the other western countries did not want to invade the Philippines and he believed that the American Revolution is a good example for the Filipinos to struggle for their own Independence. In the final analysis, he discovers that the one and only way to liberation is the way is the way of Armed Revolt in which the people of the all walks of life in the Philippines should be united and launch a systematic and well-organized revolution against the Spanish Rulers. In the past, the Spanish Government crushed the rebellions down mercilessly and these rebellious efforts were aborted prematurely due to their disunity and capriciousness. Rizal viewed that the Spanish Government was trying to stamp out the Filipinos but the Spanish Government faced many difficulties because of their increasing population and abilities. Rizal's biographer, Wenceslao Retana states that outwardly Rizal seemed to be a Peace-lover, but deep inside he was a fast and furious man who was inclined to the acts of violence and terrorism. A Filipino traitor, a turncoat who got a lucrative bribe from the Spanish Government, wrote a paper that acclaims the worthiness of the Spanish Colonization of the Philippines. In October, 1889, according to the opinion of Rizal's biographer, a refutation to that paper came out and stated that Rizal who hated violence and had love in his heart.

### **Chapter (10) How Rizal Let the World Know about the Philippines**

In the tenth Chapter (10), the author describes how Rizal thought about nature and mentality of the Filipinos and why they were colonized by the Spaniards. Rizal was writing a book to educate the Filipinos about their strength, weakness, and shortcomings. But he got an idea that it is better to write this book in French to let the world knows about the Philippines. As he felt sick at heart for his beloved Leonora, he cured his melancholy and suffering by putting his heart into the all out effort to achieve Independence for the Philippines. In 1889, there was an International

Exhibition in Paris but Rizal could not find anything related to the Filipinos and their culture. He felt so sad and agitated for that negligence, and consequently he founded a Philippine organization that included various races of the world. The objectives of his organization are (1) to convene an International Forum to discuss about the issues on the Philippines, (2) to carry out a systematic enquiry based on history and science into the Philippines, (3) to publish documents and books on the findings about the Philippines, and (4) to publicize the above-mentioned efforts by the organization. The President of this organization was a scholar named Dr. Blumentritt<sup>1</sup> and the Vice-President was Dr. Ross.

Rizal was angry about the insult by the Europeans who misconceived that the Filipinos as good-at-nothing lazy bones. He contested this idea by explaining that the Europeans in the Philippines were self-indulgent, and at the same time, the Filipino population decreased due to the brutal oppression of the Spanish Government. The Spaniards forced the Filipinos to build ships for them, so these poor oppressed people had to cut down their own trees. Both men and women became the forced labours who could not survive this inhuman exploitation. Some were killed by the Spaniards mercilessly. This chapter shows that under this difficult situation, the Filipinos were living by “be lazy for yourself, and be industrious for the Spaniards“.

### **Chapter (11): The Blistering Lava from the Volcano**

When Rizal came back to Madrid, in Spain, he saw that everything had changed. The Filipinos in Madrid were not convinced that the Spanish Government would offer peacefully the Independence they demanded, and they received a letter from the Philippines that assured there would be an impending revolution in the Philippines. They believed only in an armed revolution rather than a peaceful transfer of sovereignty just as Rizal had thought. Rizal was thinking about going back to the Philippines, since he was the only person who did not want to join in the armed revolution. Rizal misunderstood that the Spanish Government also did not want bloodshed as he did. At that time, Rizal was 31 years old, and the author describes some character traits of Rizal as follows: Rizal challenged two rebellious persons to fight him in a duel of: Rizal was able to control his anger but he was seething with rage when he was confronted by an unjust and unfair incident. The Filipinos were ready to fight with any possible weapons against the Spaniards if Rizal would lead the revolution. Even Rizal was unwittingly inclined to use violent means

---

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Ferdinand Blumentritt (1853-1913) was a German-Czech ethnographer who was specialist on the Philippines.

because of the atrocities done by the Spanish Government. He wrote a new novel named “*El Filibusterismo*” (The Reign of Greed) to inform the Spanish Government about the national awakening of the Philippines. We can see in this novel about the decreasing respect he has for the Spanish Government. The protagonist of this new novel is the same Ibarra from the previous one. In “*Noli Me Tangere*”, when the main character Ibarra and his friends run away with a boat, Elias was shot by the policemen and falls into the river, but Ibarra escapes. In this new novel Ibarra reappeared as a jewel trader named Simoun who comes back to the Philippines. Living in disguise of a rich jewel trader, his secret plan is to initiate the uprising against the Spanish Government and to rescue his lover Maria Clara from the Convent. In the synopsis of the novel, there is another story about Tandaucélo, a wood-cutter who has a son called Talis. Talis is very industrious like his father and he works for a land owner, so he saves a considerable amount of money. Then he gets married a girl. With his father and his wife, Talis buys some virgin lands and starts cultivating crops and vegetables. His wife and their eldest child die from Malaria. When the harvest time comes, the Friars ask for a rental charge for cultivating in their land. Talis gives the fees willingly because he does not want to go to the court but the Friars increase the rental fees year after year, but Talis cannot stand it anymore and their case is sent to be judged at the court. Talis watches his land with some arms but the Government soon confiscates his arms too. Therefore he protects his land with an axe. Some robbers kidnap him and ask for a ransom of 500 peso from his family. Talis’ daughter, Julie, sells herself as a slave to get that amount of money to retrieve her father but she is separated from her lover. Talis befriends the robbers and with their help he kills the delegate of Friars and a couple who work in his land as new tenant farmers, but he has to run away. Talis escapes but the police arrest his father. One day when the Viceroy and the Secretariat go out for sport-hunting, Julie tries to implore the Secretariat to release her grandfather. Since he is a good man, the Secretariat orders the release of Julie’s grandfather. In this way this novel depicts in detail the behaviour of the Spanish Viceroy and the officials. Simoun wants the Filipinos to revolt against the Spaniards so he exhorts them by telling that even the Viceroy is consent to revolt against the Friars. He smuggles ammunitions into the country with the help of a rich Chinese merchant, Quiroga, who wants very much to be Chinese consul to Manila. Simoun’s initial attempt to start the uprising did not happen because at the last hour he heard the sad news that Maria Clara died in the convent. In his agonizing moment of bereavement, he did not give the signal for the attack. Julie’s lover is Basilio, the son of Sisa from the first novel. One night, the Government raids and searches the school where Basilio lives and

some anti-Government documents are found there. Basilio is jailed and sentenced to death on account of these documents. But in accordance with an advice given by an old woman, Julie offers her flesh to the lecherous Padre Camorra for the sake of exonerating her lover from the death sentence. Julie kills herself later. In this way, Basilio gets free from the death sentence and becomes a follower of Simoun.

However, Isagani, an educated Filipino, and Paulita have fallen in love. Isagani is a patriotic man who is ready to sacrifice his love for the sake of his country. Isagani is detained because he openly criticizes the current education System and a university teacher Padre Farnedag. Therefore, the parents of Paulita do not allow their daughter to marry with Isagani and they try to find another bridegroom named Juanito Pelaez for her. On the day of the wedding Paulita Gomez and Juanito Pelaez, Simoun gives a beautiful lamp as a wedding gift to them. Only he and his confidential associate, Basilio, know that when the wick of his lamp burns lower, the nitro-glycerine hidden in a Secret compartment of the lamp will explode. Then the patriotic Filipinos will kindle the fire of revolution in Manila and siege the capital. As the wedding ceremony commences, Isagani is standing outside the house, sadly watching the merriment inside. Basilio chances upon Isagani and, warns him to go away because the lighted lamp will soon explode. Upon learning the secret of the lamp, Isagani realizes that his lover, Paulita was in serious danger. He rushes into the house and steals the lamp and hurls himself with it into the river where it explodes. The revolutionary plot was thus discovered and Simoun, although deeply wounded, escapes. He hides in a house where he meets with a monk. He retells the monk about his story and his concerns for the future of the Philippines, but soon dies. The monk throws the briefcase with the treasure taken by Simoun into the sea.

### **Chapter (12): Coming Back to Sacrifice His Life**

Chapter twelve(12) explains how Rizal was so anxious about his family and relatives who were tortured and bullied by the Spanish Government and the Friars. He wants to come back to the Philippines where the people got wind of a looming rebellion. Therefore, in October 1892, as some friends in Madrid advised him, he went to Hong Kong by boat. In Hong Kong, he earned a lot of money by working as an Ophthalmologist and he took his sister Lucia to Hong Kong. Rizal wanted his parents to move to Bomeo Island, but he thought that the Spanish Government would not allow them to do so. He sent a letter of appeal to the Viceroy to permit him to come back to the Philippines and asked for a promise not to arrest him when he was back. The Viceroy gave

him the promise, via the Spanish Counsellor in Hong Kong and sent him a Passport. Rizal and his sister came back from Hong Kong on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June, 1892. When they arrived at Manila port, they confronted a problem as the Police found out an Anti-governmental document in the bag belonged to Lucia. But this was a set-up backed by the Government, and they were not arrested. Rizal established an Association called “The Philippines Association” which was treated as a rebellious by the Spanish Government. This association was founded with a Manifesto and detailed internal regulations for its members. It was very successful among the Filipinos. Although Rizal did not commit any crime, the Government summoned him to come to the Fort Santiago where he was imprisoned. Later they sent him on a parole to Dapitan city on Mindanao Island. Rizal sent the farewell letters to his parents and his friends even before he left Hong Kong since he was suspicious about the Government’s promise. In the Dapitan city, he lived at the Mayor’s house and spent valuable time reading books, going into the forest to study the flora and the fauna, and visiting some nearby villages for anthropological research on the tools and weapons used by the indigenous tribes. He conducted classes, taught his pupils English, Spanish, and The Arts, and he also treated the eye diseases of the native people. He utilized all his earnings for the community development of the Dapitan city. At that time the Government checked Rizal’s real intention, and they found out that Rizal was not happy about the influences exercised by the Friars upon the Spanish Government and he wanted all-round development for the Filipinos. Rizal received letters from his relative frequently.

The author notes in this chapter that the Independence of the Philippines did not depend on the imprisonment of Rizal.

### **Chapter (13): The Execution**

Rizal asked his mother to live with him in Dapitan city, but the Spanish Government did not permit her to do so. The Philippines was politically unstable at that time and the Government watched everyone closely who they thought could be suspicious. A mechanic called George Taufer from Hong Kong, came to Dapitan to see Rizal for eye treatment. Taufer had an Irish adopted daughter named Josephine who fell in love with Rizal as soon as they met. At the same time the general situation in Manila was getting worse, and there was a leader named Andre Bonifatio who thought that the violence done by the Spaniards could be overcome only by a counter violence. This leader founded a secret organization called Katipunam. Rizal was exiled in Dapitan for four year. He then sent a request to the Spanish Government to go to Cuba to work

as a doctor, as a plague epidemic had broken out. With the permission of the Spanish Government, he left Manila for Cuba on 3<sup>rd</sup> of September, 1896. In the Philippines, a rebellion started on account of a sister of a Katiputnam member, and the Government was terrified and overcome with fear. The Government began to seize all members of Katipunam and there were so many casualties and the detainees, with some sentenced to death. In this horrible situation, the Spanish Government could not spare Rizal, who was the real initiator of that uprising through his novels, and they summoned him via the Viceroy to come back from Madrid. Rizal was sent to the Philippines from Barcelona and one of his friends, Dr. Regida unsuccessfully tried to save him on the way. Rizal was detained in the Fort Santiago on 3<sup>rd</sup> of November, 1896 and put him through a special court martial on 15<sup>th</sup> of December, 1896. Rizal announced his innocence and explained that he was not involved with the Katipunam which was just a social club. He also claimed that he would let the international community know about how the Spanish Government misjudged him. However, the court continued the hearing and finally he was sentenced to death by a Firing Squad on 29<sup>th</sup> of December, 1896. With his execution nearing, Rizal wrote his last poem, which, though untitled, eventually came to be known as "Mi Último Adios" (*My Last Farewell*). Written during the early hours before his execution, it was hidden in an alcohol burner, a gift from one of his European friends, and handed to his family. Within hearing of the Spanish guards, he said in English, "there is something inside", to emphasize the poem's importance. During the night before his execution, Rizal showed no sign of fear and he spent the whole night by talking joyfully with the guards and praying silently. Next morning, hands fasten with a rope behind his back, Rizal was taken to the Baganbayan Killing Field. En route, he was talking about his childhood days and scenes while a cavalry unit was protecting him from abduction by the people who loved and admired him. Rizal requested the Head of the Firing Squad to shoot him at the front instead of at the back, but the Officer told him that he was not allowed to do so. Therefore Rizal implored him to shoot him at his heart instead of his head and he wanted to stand rather than kneeling when he was shot. The officer in charge agreed to his request. Rizal said farewell to his lawyer and two priests cheerfully. At that time, the doctor checked his condition and found that he is quite fearless and healthy. Then the Firing Squad shot him simultaneously and he controlled his falling by putting his back on the ground, facing to the sky. Rizal was 35 years and 194 days old when he was executed. One year, eight months and seventeen days after, the shot that killed Rizal there was another shot that brought Spanish rule in the Philippines to an end. After the Philippines regained her Independence, Rizal's body was dug up from the grave he

was anonymously buried and finally his body was laid to rest in a big Mausoleum built for him. A patriot of the highest order, the anniversary of Rizal's death, December 30, is now celebrated as a holiday in the Philippines, called Rizal Day. A huge Rizal's Memorial Stone Column was also raised and Rizal's mother was offered honorary compensation but she refused.

### **Review**

The book "José Rizal" is a biography of José Rizal, a Filipino National Hero who sacrificed his life for the sake of his country and his people, but the name of (original) author of source book is not mentioned. The (Burmese) author writes in the preface that this book is intended for those people who may take the example of José Rizal in terms of struggle for the independence of Burma. The period in which this book was published is the period of Burma's struggle for independence, so it may encourage Burmese readers to take the example of Rizal and arouse the people's willingness to free themselves from the British Colonial rule. For the present age, it is found out that this book is a biography that informs much about the life and thoughts of José Rizal, and the facts about the Philippines, hopefully to inspire the readers to sacrifice themselves for the betterment of their country and people.

## 2.1. Commentary to Moe Hein Zaw's Report by Heinrich Geiger

„José Rizal“ is a book written by U Ohn Khin whose pseudonym is Moe Gyo. He was the secretary of Nagani Book Club which was established at the end of 1937. The book was published during the period of Burma's struggle for independence. It is pointed out by the Reviewer, Moe Hein Zaw, that the book is not only a biography of the Filipino National Hero José Rizal (1861-1896). It inspires the readers to take example of Rizal and “to sacrifice oneself for the betterment of one's country and people.” The review of the book was translated into English by Aung Kyaw Moe.

Briefly, the main historical themes which are reflected by the reviewer of the book “José Rizal” are as follows: Economic changes in the nineteenth century led to the rise of a new class of mestizos and native elites, or *principales*. We learn from the personal life of José Rizal as it is shown in the review of the book that families could afford to send their sons to universities in Manila and Europe. Influenced by Western liberal ideas, educated Filipinos called *ilustrados*, or “the enlightened”, were determined to have the radical changes in the mother country (Spain) applied to the colony itself. In other words, they wanted to be treated equal to the Spaniards, the main obstacles to this end being the powerful religious orders that dominated colonial life. This is shown in the review of chapter 2 of the book. Further on, we are told in the review of chapter 5 that Rizal wrote the novel “Noli Me Tangere” about the brutal oppression of the Filipinos by the Spanish Government. The explanations on chapter 5 of the book are a summary in length of this novel. The strong interest of the reviewer in literature can be shown by the fact that he gives much space to the introduction of a novel of José Rizal in the review of chapter 11: “El Filibusterismo” (The Reign of Greed). There we learn that this novel was written to inform the Spanish Government about the national awakening of the Philippines.

In spite of the ultimately narrow class interests behind their agitation, the *ilustrados* managed to stir up a nationalist sentiment among the masses by focusing upon friar abuse that was universally - as José Rizal did in his novels. This is pointed out by the reviewer of “José Rizal” very well. And so he makes plausible that even as the reformist or assimilationist movement faltered and died in the 1890ies – the death sentence of José Rizal was executed on 29<sup>th</sup> of December, 1896 – the upsurge of nationalism was such that a separatist movement was able to take root among the masses later on. The culmination of such developments was the republic of

1898, however short-lived it was owing to its weak *ilustrado* leadership and the success of American military and political campaigns to destroy it.

But this is already outside the scope of the review of “José Rizal”. In general, the review is following the overall framework of the interpretation of Philippine history which is also represented in the book “José Rizal”. Just as pre-1872 accounts tend to focus upon the struggle of the native clergy for equal status with the friars, post-1872 studies usually deal with the activities of the native and mestizo elite that was to lead the nationalist struggle. With its main focus on the life of José Rizal as a national hero, the book “José Rizal” is absolutely in line with the post-1872 approach. According to the review of the chapter 13, the death was the culmination of his *pasyon*. We are reminded of Rizal’s Christ-like death in Bagumbayan in 1896, when the officials who wanted Rizal dead could not immediately shout “Viva Espana” and a solemn silence reigned for some minutes. The reviewer does not mention any thoughts which go beyond this very common understanding of Rizal’s life and death.

Two years after Rizal’s death, *ilustrados* and *principales* ultimately had their way with the founding of the republic in 1898. If the revolution was experienced by some as a rebirth, a fulfilment of hopes, this quickly faded away as the leaders’ efforts were directed toward stabilizing the infant nation-state. The breaking off from Spain was recalled as an apocalyptic event – the military defeats and the capitulation of republican leader in 1899 were already the signs of the decline of the ethos represented by José Rizal. The awakening of a National spirit and the founding of a Nation are not the same: The reviewer of the book “José Rizal”, Moe Hein Zaw, does not mention that as he wants to point out the following idea: “The (Burmese) author writes in the preface that this book is intended for those people who may take the example of José Rizal in terms of struggle for the Independence of Burma.”.

Dr. Heinrich Geiger, Bonn  
October 2007

### 3. Daw Khin Hla Myint: Book Review on *Jose Rizal*

#### Translation and footnotes: U Khin Maung Saw

The book, Jose Rizal was translated by U Ohn Khin with penname Mogyo. Unfortunately, the details of his biography cannot be submitted<sup>35</sup> except that he was the Secretary of the Nagani Book Club and the second husband of the famous author Daw Dagon Khin Khin Lay.

U Ohn Khin admitted in the Foreword that he translated the book called Jose Rizal; however, he failed to mention the original title and author<sup>36</sup>. In the Foreword, U Ohn Khin wrote: “My compatriots, people of Burma, I hope and wish this book may become the guideline of your independence struggle. May this book become a big search light, as bright as the flames of a big volcano for your way to free your country. I wish my efforts to translate this book would become the first step of the ladder in your independence struggle. May I wish, a person like Dr. Jose Rizal should come out soon in Burma!” Hence, it is very clear that U Ohn Khin intended to enchant the people of Burma, then a British Colony, to consider Dr. Jose Rizal as an ideal person, to follow his example by sacrificing his own life for the liberation of their motherland from a foreign ruler.

#### Chapter (1)

In this chapter, he described where the native land of Jose Rizal, the Philippines Archipelago is. The Philippines was still ruled by the Spaniards<sup>37</sup>. He explained further, how the Isles were

---

<sup>35</sup> U Ohn Khin was a well-known author, journalist and owner and chief editor of Bamakhit (Burma Times) and Mogyo (Thunder) Newspapers. He was a friend of U Nu, the first Prime Minister of Burma when she regained her independence however, he was a big political foe of General Ne Win. U Ohn Khin was the first journalist detained by Gen. Ne Win after the 1962 military *coup de tat*. See Details in a Journalist, a General and an Army in Burma, written by U Thaug.

<sup>36</sup> The original book supposed to be „The Hero of The Filipinos, the Story of Jose Rizal, Poet, Patriot and Martyr, by Charles Edward Russell and E. B. Rodriguez, George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., London, 1924. After reading this book and U Ohn Khin’s „Translation“, I (KMS) have to conclude that U Ohn Khin wrote his Burmese Version based on C.E. Russell & E.B. Rodriguez’s Book. The flow of U Ohn Khin’s version was more or less freely translated and he added his own ideas and comments in many parts. Apart from that he omitted some parts from the original version. Most probably either he did not like them or he might have thought those parts would not be appealing to the Burmese people. I should rather say it was Jose Rizal’s Biography by Charles Edward Russell and E. B. Rodriguez, „Retold by U Ohn Khin together with his own ideas, comments and suggestions to the Burmese people“.

<sup>37</sup> It was not stated in U Ohn Khin’s version. It cannot be ruled out that it was the Reviewer’s careless mistake. She should know from history that in 1898 the Filipino Independence War broke out and the Republic of the Philippines was declared. However, the United States of America did not recognize this nation and occupied the Philippines

named the Philippines. In the year 1519 A.D, a Portuguese Navigator called Magellan, became a subject of the Spanish king Charles V and on his majesty's service, he sailed westwards with five ships in search of the "Spice Isles". They crossed the Atlantic Ocean, sailed down to the southern most point of South America and reached the Pacific Ocean. They sailed westwards and how they had to suffer because of dangerous high waves, food and water shortage etc. After 98 days of sailing in the Pacific Ocean, on 16th March 1521 they found an island. The natives of that island stole and robbed everything. Hence, the island was named "Ladron" (Island of Robbers)<sup>38</sup> by them and sailed further to the west in search of the Spice Isles.

A few days later they "discovered" an Archipelago. To honour the Crown Prince Philip, they named the Archipelago "The Philippines".

In this way U Ohn Khin described, how Magellan and his sailors "discovered" the Philippines.<sup>39</sup>

The natives of the Philippines welcomed Magellan and his sailors and treated them well at the beginning, however, when Magellan and his followers forced to baptise the natives by gun-point, Magellan and some captains of the ships were liquidated by the natives.<sup>40</sup>

Spain declared the Philippines to be their colony. In the mean time Portugal did the same thing. In fact, the natives of the isles, who are of Malay tribes, were and are the real owners of this archipelago and they should rule their own country. However, the head of the Roman Catholic

---

after paying the amount of US\$20,000,000 in accordance with the Treaty of Paris which eventually ended the Spanish-American War. So, the Philippines became an American Colony in 1902. World History was taught in the schools of the then British Colonies. No doubt, as a journalist U Ohn Khin, who had studied in Burma then a British Colony, knew this history when he translated the book in the 1930's.

<sup>38</sup> Isla los Ladrones

<sup>39</sup> It was not stated in the English Version. The whole paragraph was U Ohn Khin's explanation to Burmese readers about Magellan and the Philippines. U Ohn Khin's explanation was much longer and gave more details about the Philippines and its people.

<sup>40</sup> According to Filipino history books Magellan was killed by the Chieftain called Lapu Lapu before he could land on the shore. Some of his followers escaped, the next mission came thirty years later with gun boats and made the Archipelago their colony. In the Philippines, there is a sea fish called Lapu Lapu too. Hence, a famous joke evolved among the Filipinos: "Who killed Magellan? Lapu Lapu! Who killed Lapu Lapu? Who else! Fishermen"!

Here too, the book reviewer omitted the ironical comment of U Ohn Khin, who wrote "Magellan and his followers might have forgotten or ignored, what Jesus Christ taught: if you are slapped on the left cheek, please turn your right cheek to be slapped. However, the Spaniards taught the natives how to become good Christians and how to behave as good Christians, so that the natives had to turn one cheek after another whenever Spaniards wanted to torture them. The way Spaniards treated the Filipinos and Indians in America was comparable to the way the Roman Imperators tortured the Christians in early centuries AD, however, the Pope then, neither stopped nor condemned it".

Church, the Pope in Rome drew an imaginary line on the globe and decided that west of that line belonged to Spain and east of that line belonged to Portugal. In that way, the Philippines became a Spanish Colony in 1529.

Spaniards ruled the Philippines under iron fists and treated the natives cruelly. That's why, from 1573 to 1872, within 300 years there were 100 revolutions, in average one revolution in 3 years. In this way, the natives of the Philippines showed that they didn't tolerate the illegitimate and cruel government of the foreigners. Among these 100 revolutions, 31 struggles were recorded to be very big revolts. The Spaniards tortured the revolutionaries as well as innocent people very cruelly, much more than "the third degree" in the modern days, so that the natives would fear, however, the more the Spanish government tortured, the more the revolutions broke out.

In 1872 the Cavite Revolt broke out. The Spanish government sentenced the rebels as well as three innocent native Catholic Priests, Father Mariano Gomez, Father Jose Burgos and Father Emilio Zamora to death. These three priests were executed by squeezing the neck<sup>41</sup> at Bagumbayan<sup>42</sup> death field. Father Gomez was 85 already and he and the other two priests prayed for the henchmen while they were taken to be liquidated. The Spaniards, particularly the new comers direct from Spain, discriminated the natives and the natives hated the Spaniards. The Spanish Friars owned many lands and they became collaborators of the government. Jose Rizal's father Francisco Mercado became one of the targets of the rulers at first and later his wife was also under watch<sup>43</sup>. During this time, one saviour was born. He was Jose Rizal.

## **Chapter (2)**

This Chapter was titled "Life as a student" and described Jose Rizal's childhood and youth. It was written that Jose Rizal was very talented and intelligent. He knew all Spanish alphabets when

---

<sup>41</sup> The three priest were actually garrotted. The meaning of the verb garrotte is given in the Oxford Dictionary as: "Execute a person condemned to death by strangling or throttling a stick being twisted to tighten a cord over the wind pipe; apparatus used for it". Execution by garotte was and is not common in Burma. U Ohn Khin failed to explain properly but he translated as: 'Execution by squeezing the neck'. Many Burmese could be confused that the three priests were hanged on the gallows because the execution by hanging on the gallow was and is very common in Burma.

<sup>42</sup> It means 'New Town' in Tagalog, the main language of the Philippines. Nowadays, this field is known as the Luneta Park. Here stands the monument commemorating Rizal a picture of which is reproduced in the book.

<sup>43</sup> The book reviewer omitted many important points from page 24 to page 46. In U Ohn Khin's original version, there are many facts to be pointed out or discussed in a book review!

he was only three. His mother taught him Spanish and their mother tongue Tagalog. He was able to read the “Vulgata Bible” in Spanish before he turned five. His mother was a graduate of a Manila College and very fond of good literatures and poems. She trained him to read standard literatures and how to write poetry. Because of that, he could speak, read, write and understand Spanish and Tagalog since his childhood.

One day his mother told him the story of the moth and the flame of the lamp. Despite of the warning of its mother not to go near the flame, the moth did and was burnt. Jose Rizal was not interested in the motto of the tale instead he wanted to be adventurous like the small moth. He admitted that in his writings later. When he grew up, went abroad and studied he had collected many bitter experiences. Hence, his understanding and motto of the tale was that he wanted to try to find a flame which would produce the light for his country’s independence, even if he, like the small moth, had to risk his life to find that flame.

Jose Rizal was born on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1861. Since childhood he was good natured, hard working, easy to be taught. He wanted to stay alone, fond of books, wanted to read and write. Sometimes he wanted to listen to debates or went to churches and observed churchgoers. It was very strange for a child his age and became mature much earlier than others. When he was six years old he was so thin and looked weak, hence, his uncle let him do physical exercises. Without teaching from anybody he could draw pictures and make models out of clay and wax. These proved that he was artistic. When he was four years old his younger sister Concha died and for first time in his life his tears fell because of love and sorrow. His father wanted him to become a scholar and sent him to school. When he was nine he became an outstanding pupil despite of bullying by older pupils and some sort of discrimination by some teachers in the school. The translator of the book, U Ohn Khin believed that his bitter experiences in his youth as well as the arrogance, brutalities, bullying and tortures of Spaniards towards the natives of his country pushed Rizal to decide to become the national hero in the future.

Later his parents sent him to a Jesuit Mission School called Ateneo. He learnt from his elder brother how some priests like Father Burgos were killed by the Spanish Government. He wrote a poem about that with emotions. Though he was only eleven, he passed the entrance examination very easily. He was a distinguish pupil and was awarded prizes. He started reading novels (in

Spanish). At that time his mother was arrested and had to stay in prison for two years. He wanted to free his mother, relatives and his whole people from the foreign rulers. He noticed that the Filipino mind was not in any respect inferior to the Spanish; hence, the pretence of Spanish superiority was no basis but only the overawing military. And how could he free his own people? Only education and political liberty could free them from the Spaniards!

### **Chapter (3)**

In this chapter, it was written, Jose Rizal finished his Bachelor of Arts examination on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1879<sup>44</sup> with highest honours from the Ateneo School. At that time he was only 16. A month later, he enrolled at the Santo Thomas University. When he was 18 he was awarded the First Prize in the competition among Filipino poets with the poem entitled “To the Philippine Youth”<sup>45</sup>. In fact, he had no right to win because the competition was supposed to be for adults, however, his poem was selected to be the best and he won. After that he participated with an assumed name in another poetic tourney to celebrate the glory of the Spanish Poet Cervantes. He won the First Prize again, however, when he was discovered to be a Filipino the laurel was taken from him and bestowed upon a Spaniard. It became salt in the wound for him again because of being a native Filipino<sup>46</sup> all doors of success were shut.

One day he returned to his native Calamba and found out that his mother was nearly blind.<sup>47</sup> Jose Rizal was very good in painting and sculpture. Had he studied that field he should become one of the top artists in the world. Once he made an excellent sculpture of Father Guerrico of the Ateneo School. There are many other excellent paintings and sculptures produced by Jose Rizal. Apart from that he was a good poet and dramatist. He wrote for his fellows a metrical drama called “Beside the Pasig” and on December 8, 1880, it was publicly performed by one of the student societies. This drama indirectly criticized the Spanish rule in the Philippines. Since that time he was under the observation of the Spanish authorities. One day when he came back from his

---

<sup>44</sup> It must be a typing error of the book reviewer. In the original book, the year he passed his exam was in 1876. In 1879 he was already 18 and could not be 16.

<sup>45</sup> Original was in Spanish „La Juventud Filipina”

<sup>46</sup> At that time, the natives of the Philippines were named ,Indios’. The Spaniards born and lived in the Philippines were called Filipinos and the Spaniards who came from Spain were the ,Spaniards’. The natives of the Philippines were called Filipinos only from the time of their Independence War against Spain.

<sup>47</sup> He found out that not only his mother but also many natives of the Philippines were suffering from eye diseases. Hence, he decided to study medicine, choosing ophthalmology to be his specialty.

mother's house he did not see a civil guard staying in a dark place and not saluted him.<sup>48</sup> Because of not saluting the guard, he was slashed by that Civil Guard with his sword across the back. When he reported this to the authorities, jeering indifference was all his reward. After that incident he decided to go abroad for further studies, however, it was not easy for him to get a passport. Hence, he applied for a passport by using the name of one of his cousins. His elder brother Paciano and one of his uncles helped him to meet the travel costs. One younger sister gave him her diamond ring to pawn. He slipped into Manila and after midnight stole aboard his steamer. (When day broke he was well on his way to Singapore).<sup>49</sup>

In this way U Ohn Khin described the bitter experiences and discriminations Jose Rizal had to face while he was studying in the Philippines as well as the cruelties of the Spanish Government towards the natives.

#### **Chapter (4)**

As soon as Jose Rizal's absence was discovered, all members of the family were dogged, watched, waylaid and cross questioned as if they were the suspects of a murder case. Jose Rizal arrived at Barcelona via Singapore and France. He noticed that authorities of the Main Land Spain and that of their colonies are totally different. He could move and talk freely in Barcelona. He enrolled for medical studies, literature and philosophy at the Madrid University, while outside the university he took art and modern languages. At first, he learnt Greek, Latin, French, English and Italian. After that he took lessons in Catalan, Arabic, German, Sanskrit and Hebrew. Although he was good in his studies and very polite he had about twenty friends whose characters were similar to him, but he was not popular with social life. He carried to Madrid his favourite notion of life led by time-tables; and, dividing his day into segments, set apart one for general reading. While reading 'Journey to the Philippines'<sup>50</sup> written by the German Philosopher Dr. Jagor, he noticed the characteristics of the Natives of the Philippines. He liked the books

---

<sup>48</sup> U Ohn Khin wrote ironically with humour that the civil guard was only an ordinary human being, neither an angel nor a *devata* whose body is shining in the darkness; hence, the poor Rizal could not notice him and not saluted. Of course, it was a big offence! A coloured native had to show respect to a colonial officer who was doing his duty and was never doing wrong. The civil guard was so kind enough to slash him with the sword across the back. He had a right to slash with the blade to Jose Rizal's neck as a rebel!

<sup>49</sup> This sentence was not in the Review; however, I found it in U Ohn Khin's book.

<sup>50</sup> As stated in the Book Review and U Ohn Khin's book, however, it was not mentioned in the English Version of Russell!

about the United States of America and their presidents because they became the head of states not by divine rights but because of their abilities. Even a poor man could become a president there. The American Independence war was his ideal type to regain the freedom of his own country.

The money sent by his uncle was not enough for his existence in Spain and he had to work as a teacher in a private school. Throughout all his studies he performed better in languages, history, and literature than in medicine but he chose the medical profession because it could help his desire. He became licentiate of medicine in 1884; however, because of financial shortages he got his doctorate only in 1887.

He went to Paris and worked as a Clinical Assistant to Dr. L. de Weckert, one of the most famous oculists then of Europe. He wanted to free his compatriots from the Spanish yoke and wrote the 'Noli Me Tangere', the greatest work in Philippine literature and one of the greatest achievements of all times and all lands. The second part of that story was written in Heidelberg, Germany, while he was studying there. He knew that this kind of writing could send him to the gallows and he recalled the tale of "The moth and the candle flame" which he heard from his mother while he was young. Despite of the motto of the tale, he had an imagination himself to be the young moth and wanted to be adventurous, even if he had to face dangers.

After Heidelberg, he studied in Leipzig and Berlin Universities. In the mean time he tried to finish the "Noli Me Tangere". He thought, many of his compatriots were uneducated and because of lack of education they were still far away from independence. Furthermore, he believed, only when one knew how to enjoy independence, one should fight for independence. Unfortunately, Rizal had not noticed a fact that, nobody would know how to enjoy independence before they gained their independence. This was one weak idea of Rizal about the Independence of the Philippines.

In this way U Ohn Khin wrote about Rizal's further studies abroad.

## **Chapter (5)**

U Ohn Khin wrote, Jose Rizal thought, many of his compatriots were uneducated and because of

lack of education they were still far away from independence. Even if they would regain their independence in those days, they could not stay as an independent country for a long time. He had no doubt that one day in the future, the Philippines would become a great nation after the country could regain independence. However, the natives of the Philippines should be educated so that they could see how exploited and cruel the Spanish government was. Only then, they could revolt against the Spaniards without using arms. With this intention he wrote the “Noli Me Tangere”. The summary of the story is as follows:

A wealthy Filipino, who was even respected by the Spaniards, sent his son Juan Crisostomo Ibarra to a school in Europe. While the son was in Europe the father had a problem with the local friar, Father Damaso. The quarrel was about land. He was sent to jail and died in jail. Ibarra heard of his father’s death, suspected that it could not be a natural death, however he did not know that it had something to do with Father Damaso.

A Filipina called Sisa had two sons called Basilio and Crispin. Her husband was a drunkard, bully, who usually beat and robbed her. Her two boys had to work as acolytes of the church in another village, ringing the bells and doing all menial jobs. One day she cooked good meal and waited for her sons, unfortunately, however, her worthless husband came and ate up almost all the supper for the boys. Though Sisa was not happy, she dared not say a single word, otherwise she would be bullied. After that her husband asked for the boys and went out again. She did not eat her supper because it was no longer enough for three persons. The boys could not come back too because the curate accused Crispin of stealing and demanded restitution, otherwise the boy was threatened to be beaten to death. That night they were kept ringing the bells in the church tower because the storm was raging and it is believed that the sound of church bells ringing keeps off the lightning. While they were ringing the bells, they were again accused of not ringing the bells properly and the friars dragged Crispin off to the punishment and locked Basilio in the tower. Basilio untied the ropes from the bells and escaped from a window and rushed home. Unfortunately Crispin was shot and killed by a Civil Guard. Later, Sisa was arrested for Crispin’s alleged theft. She was paraded through the streets as a common malefactor and locked in jail. Basilio hid in the woods. Sisa heard the destiny of her unlucky son Crispin and became insane, when she was released from jail. She wandered about the country and lived on alms. When at last she met her other son Basilio, she in her madness believed him to be an enemy and fled. He ran

after her and overtook her in time to hold her in his arms as she died.

Although Ibarra heard about the death of his father and his father's body was thrown into the pond by orders of the friars he did not notice that it was the plot of Father Damaso. When he knew about that he decided to pay back with "vendetta". In the mean time the friars planned to liquidate him. He still had high impression on the Spaniards and he wanted to find a new system of education to replace the useless old one. While discussing with a school teacher about the education system it came out how Father Damaso cruelly treated teachers and pupils including that teacher as well as how the teachers and the pupils had to tolerate those things. Ibarra consoled that teacher and promised him that he would establish a school with his own funds and did. Ibarra was warned that somebody would try to kill him on the day of the laying of the foundation stone. That's why he was careful on that day. As expected, the stone supposed to be used for foundation fell down from above, but he could escape. At dinner in that night Father Damaso came. Ibarra had no knowledge yet that Father Damaso was the one who killed his father as well as plotted to assassinate him, however, Father Damaso could not control his anger because his plan to liquidate Ibarra was in vain. Thus, he started insulting Ibarra's father. Ibarra became angry, boxed Father Damaso and squeezed his neck. Their fight ended when Ibarra's sweetheart Maria Clara, who was the daughter of Captain Tiago intervened and played the role of mediator between them. After that the friars excommunicated Ibarra for using violent hand on a friar, an unpardonable sin. Because of this punishment Captain Tiago broke off Ibarra's engagement with his daughter. Many rich Filipinos like Captain Tiago had high impressions on the Spaniards. Ibarra and Maria Clara were playmates and grew up together. They planned to get married when Ibarra returned from Europe. He had been true to her in all his seven years of travel. However, their dream was destroyed by Captain Tiago. He accepted the request of a Spaniard called Linares to become his son-in-law and declared the engagement between Maria Clara and Linares despite of Maria Clara's vehement protests.

In the mean time the governor-general visited Ibarra's home town. Since Ibarra's father was his friend the governor-general helped Ibarra. The governor-general knew that between the friars and the archbishops of Manila was a smouldering feud, for the archbishop was usually chosen outside the four orders. He nudged the archbishop; the archbishop cancelled the excommunication, however, with Captain Tiago the lifting of this ban upon Ibarra made no difference; he was still

anathema to all-powerful orders. The marriage between Linares and Maria Clara never came into being because she was seriously ill. A coastal pilot called Elias informed Ibarra about Maria Clara's illness. It was Elias who warned Ibarra of the plot to kill him with the foundation stone. Once Ibarra had saved Elias from the attack of a crocodile and the latter had sworn his gratitude. Elias was known to be a boatman. It was only his undercover job. In fact, he was an educated man who hated the misbehaviours of the Spaniards, wanted to revolt against Spanish rule and organised people by chance. He told Ibarra his personal experiences about the cruelties of the Spanish government. He also informed Ibarra that a personal letter of Ibarra sent to his lover Maria Clara was for the time being in the hands of the friars and because of that letter they were planning to arrest Ibarra as a traitor of the Spanish government. Ibarra wondered how the friars got the letter which he gave to Maria Clara about seven years ago. He wanted to check whether his lover betrayed him and surrendered that letter to the friars. Despite of Elias warning he went to see Maria Clara. She told him the truth that the letter was stolen by a friar called Father Silva, who courted her. She also told him the truth that she was not the biological daughter of Captain Tiago instead she was the illegitimate daughter of Father Damaso. Satisfied that his lover was innocent, Ibarra tried to escape from his enemies. Elias waited for him with a boat along the Pasig River. Then they rowed upstream. One Civil Guard shot them with his gun. Elias was shot and fell down into the river. The guards thought it was Ibarra and went back to Manila and reported that Ibarra, the desperate rebel, trying to escape, had been shot dead. When Maria Clara heard this news she gave up all hopes and became a nun.

In this way U Ohn Khin summarised the story in his translation.

## **Chapter (6)**

In this chapter, U Ohn Khin explained that the Novel "Noli Me Tangere" was the true story of Jose Rizal's life. The story of Ibarra was the real experiences of Dr. Rizal. The imprisonment of Ibarra's father and mother were the real story of Dr. Rizal's parents who were really arrested and got prison sentences.<sup>51</sup> Father Damaso and Father Silva were the assumed names of the two friars

---

<sup>51</sup> In U Ohn Khin's book, Dr. Rizal showed the readers indirectly by the imprisonment of Ibarra's father the way Dr. Rizal's mother got jail sentence. U Ohn Khin did not mention about Dr. Rizal's father as the book reviewer wrote.

It is interesting that U Ohn Khin gave emphasis to this aspect of the novel without taking note of the character Sisa, her husband and two sons. The Filipinos refer to their country as Motherland. In which case, Sisa was supposed to represent the country and the cruel husband is Spain. The two sons are the people.

with whom Dr. Rizal had bitter experiences. Maria Clara was the assumed person of Dr. Rizal's lover Leonora. While he was writing this novel Leonora was not yet married to a British Engineer called Henry C. Kipping, however he knew already that the marriage would be unavoidable.

Most of Dr. Rizal's novels are unique. Nobody, apart of him wanted to write in that style. He had written of the social conditions of the Philippines and the life of the Filipinos then. He told the truth about their beliefs, hopes, longings, complaints and sorrows. All Filipinos had to bear these burdens because they had no other choice but to suffer. Despite of these burdens they could still smile and laugh because laughing is the best remedy to avoid sorrows. Dr. Rizal's novels were full of tragedies and nobody wanted to read because they did not like to burst into tears.

Jose Rizal fell in love with his second cousin Leonora who was the daughter of his mother's first cousin Antonio Rivera.<sup>52</sup> The uncle agreed them to get married when he came back from Spain after his studies and gave him financial support during his studies. He was faithful to his sweetheart and wrote regularly from Madrid and she replied. However, he was under surveillances of the Spanish Government and they destroyed his reputation. Leonora's mother changed her mind and persuaded her to marry an English engineer called Henry Kipping. The mother talked only good things about Henry to her daughter daily and in the mean time she bribed two postal clerks and intercepted the mails between Jose and Leonora. Leonora wondered why she did not receive letters from Jose and it was the same for Jose. Finally, Leonora surrendered to her mother's wishes, however, one day while her mother was not at home she

---

While U Ohn Khin translated this book, one novel called "Doh May May" (Our Mother) written by the author Maha Swe was banned in Burma, in which he wrote a young and pretty lady called Ma Daung (Ms. Peacock) was happily married and had six young sons. One day, a bandit leader called Ko In killed her husband and raped her and made her as his wife by force. In fact, Ma Daung (Ms. Peacock) represented Mother Burma and her cruel second husband Ko In represented England. After Ko In got Ma Daung, he not only misused all of her wealth and properties but also bullied all steps-sons. He did not send the children to school and let them work for him. When the children became teenagers, the five elder sons (who represented the ethnic minorities) did not like him but due to lack of education tolerated him. However, the youngest son Maung Myo Nyunt (who represented the Burman), supposed to be the most intelligent among them and an educated one, tried to revolt against the cruel step father and search for friends who might help them.

<sup>52</sup> It was written in both U Ohn Khin and the Book Reviewer's versions, however in the original English book of Russell and Rodriguez they wrote Antonio Rivera was uncle and benefactor of Jose Rizal. They did not mention whether he was Rizal's paternal or maternal uncle nor did they mention that he was a paternal or maternal cousin. Most probably U Ohn Khin and the book reviewer took it for granted that she was his second cousin because marriages between second cousins were and are not very strange in Burma, however, marriages between first cousins, though not taboo, were and are not common in Burma with the exception of the marriages between 'Cross Cousins' among the Arakanese, which was the tradition of Lord Buddha's ancestors Sakka Sakis Royal Families. (See compare and contrast Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Freedom From Fear. P. 64.)

received a mail from Jose Rizal and found out that Jose wrote her regularly but he never received her replies. Only then she noticed the trick of her own mother, unfortunately, however, it was too late for her because the wedding date was already set and everything was arranged. She died with a broken heart two years later.

This was the tragic love story between Jose Rizal and Leonora Rivera.

### **Chapter (7)**

In this chapter, Jose Rizal was not yet informed that Leonora became Henry's wife. He was still writing the last part of his novel in Berlin. He had not enough money to publish. Once or twice he decided to burn the manuscripts. In the mean time, he received a telegram from Maximo Viola, whom he knew while he was in Madrid. Maximo Viola was a well to do man and he wanted to make a tour inside Switzerland and Germany with him together. Jose told him his problems and declined to join Viola's trip. Viola gave him money for the publication as well as for the trip. Then, Jose Rizal could publish his novel within a few weeks. Normally, it would be difficult to send this kind of books to the Philippines. However, Jose Rizal used his tricks and wits. He put those books in two sea trunks, declared as dried goods and addressed to two rich merchants in Manila. When these books were in the Philippines everybody wanted to read the books. The Spanish government made a committee to make a report about this book. The committee reported that the book could endanger Spanish Rule in the Philippines and recommended to ban the book. Although the book was banned Filipinos read the book secretly. When Filipinos read this book some people stayed as scouts to watch for the authorities. These scouts could warn the readers on time. In this way Dr. Rizal's aim succeeded.

After his trip together with Maximo Viola, Dr. Rizal returned to his native land on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1887. He treated his mother's eye disease and she was cured and could see back. At the beginning of 1888 he was summoned by the governor-general and asked for an explanation about the facts accused by the committee. He gave the explanation. The government said his life was endangered in the Philippines because he had made many enemies because of the book and some people hated him. That's why they wanted to suggest him to accept a bodyguard offered by the government to protect his life. In fact, they wanted to put him under government surveillance as long as he was in the Philippines. However, later that bodyguard became his friend. In any case,

the Spanish government was still thinking on how to crush Jose Rizal and his ideas. In the mean time, the tax problems evolved. Jose Rizal studied the taxes between poor people and rich people, then, he collected the signatures and made a petition to the government. In this way he became a patriotic leader among the Filipino people. Although Governor General Terrero was a nice man he could not do against the friars. Hence, he suggested Jose Rizal to leave the Philippines. Dr. Rizal also agreed to that advice. Just to avoid the eventual armed rebellion he went abroad. This time the authorities issued him the passport without any problem. He left for Hong Kong by ship on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1888.

These were the pros and cons about his book “Noli Me Tangere”.

### **Chapter (8)**

In Macao Dr. Rizal met some Filipinos in exile because of the incidents in 1872. Many educated Filipinos as well as good people from the Philippines were exiled by the Spanish government in 1872. The Filipino Consul in Hong Kong advised him to stay in Hong Kong; however, he discussed with the exiled Filipinos there and went to Japan. When he arrived at Tokyo he was welcomed by the Spanish Diplomatic Mission there and gave him a job as a translator and interpreter. In fact, the Spanish government wanted to keep Dr. Rizal under watch. He stayed only one month in Japan; however, he could speak Japanese fluently when he left Japan for the U.S. on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1888 the ship arrived at San Francisco, however, because of the outbreak of cholera there, their ship was not allowed to harbour. When they were allowed to land he stayed at the O' Palace Hotel. He noticed unfortunately and unhappily that Asian-Americans (then Chinese) and African-Americans (then Negroes) were racially discriminated by the Caucasian-Americans (then Whites). After he had observed America he went to England. Visited the British Museum and searched for the book about the Philippines and the Filipinos written by Antonio de Morga in 1607.<sup>53</sup>

Usually, the Spaniards never admitted that they ruled the Philippines brutally; instead they claimed the natives of the archipelago were uncivilized and because of their administration through law and orders the natives became civilized etc. etc., however, in this book, de Morga

---

<sup>53</sup> “Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas”

stated that Filipinos were as civilized as the Spaniards, master in handicrafts, trades, navigation as well as in ship building. Dr. Rizal thought his country deserved her independence from Spain.

He went to Paris and stayed in the house of a painter called Juan Luna. Luna was famous through a portrait made at the residence of the governor general of the Philippines. Dr. Rizal lived in Europe and wrote articles and novels in which he openly stated about the cruelties of the Spanish government and friars of the Philippines. He was beyond the reach of the Spanish authorities and friars of the Philippines, however, his relatives were still in the Philippines. Hence, they had to face maltreatments.<sup>54</sup>

Dr. Rizal told one of his friends that he decided to write seven books to agitate the natives of the Philippines. If he finds out that his compatriots were not yet agitated even after seven books, he had no other choice but he had to give up his struggle and would commit suicide.

His second novel “El Filibusterismo” was a philosophical-political treatise with a novelistic trend. He wanted to point out to his compatriots to struggle for the freedom of their motherland by themselves and particularly for the memory of the three priests executed at the Bagumbayan Field, February 28, 1872.

In this way, U Ohn Khin described how Dr. Rizal left the Philippines for the second time and wrote the second novel.

### **Chapter (9)**

Somebody may think Dr. Rizal wanted to gain independence from Spain step by step through reforms. It is not true. He wanted to see the Philippines be ruled by the natives. He wrote many articles in the “La Solidaridad” and discussed the possibility of future independence for his people. He set it as a century. It was urged that even if the Philippines were free they would instantly be snapped up by some powerful and greedy neighbours such as Japan and Great Britain. He said, if the Philippines succeed in winning their independence war, their people could resist all other invaders like Holland, France, Britain and Germany. It was better to die rather

---

<sup>54</sup> Not clearly stated in the ‘Book Review’. I translated accordingly from U Ohn Khin’s book.

staying under a cruel regime. The solidarity and unity among the Filipinos were the most important factor because the Spanish rulers in the Philippines introduced 'Divide and Rule Policy' among the natives. If his compatriots could not notice this trap of the Spaniards, the future of the whole Filipino folks will be endangered, however, many Filipinos had seen the wits of the Spaniards and the people were more united. The Spanish rulers knew about that and they were also alert.<sup>55</sup> Still he hopefully clung to peaceful agitation as the means of improvement.

Retana wrote that Jose Rizal was the one that abhorred violent revolution in his mind but desired it in his heart. He met many Filipinos in exile. Among them it was customary to circulate pamphlets against the Spanish rule in the Philippines.

In Hong Kong one article was published, supposed to be written by a Filipino, which stated that it should be better for the Philippines if the country would be ruled by the Spaniards also in the future. It could either be written by a Filipino lackey of the Spaniards or a Filipino who got money from the Spanish rulers. Perhaps he was not much of a Filipino; perhaps he was, in the bulk, Spaniard. In October of that year, 1889, somebody countered the above mentioned article. It was unsigned, but to the colonies and the authorities, the authorship seemed unmistakable. Only one Filipino could write like that, who else other than Jose Rizal!<sup>56</sup>

## **Chapter (10)**

While he was thinking of his country's future and pointing out the cruelties and injustices of the Spaniards, Jose Rizal did not hide the weaknesses and shortcomings of the Filipinos. He wanted to write the pros and cons of the Filipinos in French so that the whole world should know. That's why he had to study French and tried to master French, to be able to write in it as if it were his mother tongue. He was able to prepare a French text book for students. At that time, his lover Leonora had married Henry, hence, as a part of the remedy of the wound of his heart, he occupied most of his time for the Filipino struggle for independence.

---

<sup>55</sup> Not clearly stated in the 'Book Review'. I translated accordingly from U Ohn Khin's book.

<sup>56</sup> Not clearly stated in the 'Book Review'. I translated accordingly from U Ohn Khin's book.

There were no participants from the Philippines at the 1889 exposition in Paris. Therefore he organised an international league to make known to the world the facts about the Filipinos. He called this society the “Association Internationale des Philippinistes”. The aim of this society was: 1. International Conference for Filipino affairs, 2. Historical and scientific research about the Philippines, 3. Printing of papers about the Philippines, 4. Propaganda about these facts.

Jose Rizal cited the writings of authors like Antonio de Morga and Gaspar de San Augustino and pointed out in the “La Solidaridad” magazine that Filipinos became lazy because of the forced labours introduced by the Spaniards. Filipinos were forced to cut wood with their own expenses for Spanish ship buildings as well as in the dock yards works. Then, Filipinos did not work properly because they were not paid. The Filipinos thought already: “If we work harder, it will profit the Spaniards. If we don’t work hard they don’t gain too much. So, why should we work hard”! Then, they were identified as lazy people. Population decrease on the Filipino Archipelago was caused by the cruelties of the Spaniards.

It was Jose Rizal’s philosophy of his nation and people.

## **Chapter (11)**

In this chapter U Ohn Khin described the unique characters of Jose Rizal.

When he arrived back in Madrid, Spain, Jose Rizal noticed that the ideas of Filipinos in exile had changed within five years of his absentia. Most of them believed the Independence of their country could not be achieved by peaceful methods. It was useless to approach and request the Spaniards. All of them agreed that there was no other alternative but they had to revolt against the Spanish authorities and declare an independence war. Many friends in the Philippines too informed him that they would start the armed independence struggle soon. Jose Rizal personally did not like violent actions such as armed struggles; however his Novel “Noli Me Tangere” unwittingly supported violent struggle. He was thirty one at that time, in good health and was a good speaker. Most of his speeches enchanted many people. He was not a talkative and an overacting person, but open. He was kind, helpful and a good hearted man. Once he mentioned to a friend, while strolling on one of the streets of London, that most friars in the Philippines underestimated him, however, these friars had to regret it one day. He liked music and was a

good composer. Sometimes, while he was conversing with friends, his mind was either on composing or thinking to write some articles. He might have some intuitions too. Once, while he was strolling with a friend near the Bagumbayan Field, he predicted that one day he would be killed by a firing squad inside this field.<sup>57</sup> Normally, he was very calm and could control his anger; however, twice in his life he challenged two persons for duel by swords. It cannot be ruled out that the cruelties of the Spaniards on his native land forced him to change his mind later. In his second novel,<sup>58</sup> the hero was a Jewel Trader Simoun. In fact, he was the same person Ibarra, the hero of his first novel "Noli Me Tangere", who was not killed by the civil guards but escaped. He had changed his name to Simoun and was active as an underground revolutionist. A wood cutter called Tandang<sup>59</sup> Selo had a son Tales. Tales was a hard working person and could produce a lot from his farm. The friars wanted to increase tax year by year. When he could not afford and refused to pay, the friars organized some kidnapers and let them kidnap Tales. His daughter Juli sold herself as a slave with five hundred pesos and paid the ransom. When Tales was freed by the kidnapers he killed the one who represented the friars in his area and also the couple appointed by the friars to work in his farm. After that he escaped and his old father was arrested. After Juli went to meet the governor general and his secretary and requested for clemency, the old man was released. This book held the interest of the people. In this way he pointed out the cruelties of friars and Spaniards dramatically.

The story continued: The jewel trader Simoun organized for the armed rebellion. In the meantime he became very sad because he was informed that his former lover Maria Clara died. Juli's boy friend was Basilio, one of the sons of Sisa from the first novel. The Spanish authorities framed Basilio to be arrested and sentenced him to death. Juli had no other choice, but to approach the influential friar Father Camorra and bribed him with her body as his sexual object. Basilio was released from prison; however, Juli committed suicide by jumping out from the window. Basilio joined Simoun, however, Simoun failed to persuade him in the plans for a revolution. He added two other characters in this novel. They were Isagani, an educated and ambitious Filipino and his lover Paulita. Isagani was arrested because he criticised a university

---

<sup>57</sup> By the way, Gen.Aung San, the National Hero of Burma, the de facto prime minister of British Burma then, told the British Governor Major General Sir Hubert Rance in 1947, just a few months before he was assassinated that he would be killed by his political opponents one day, sooner or later. In that way he predicted his destiny like Jose Rizal.

<sup>58</sup> El Filibusterismo

<sup>59</sup> This word means 'old man' in Tagalog.

teacher<sup>60</sup>. Paulita's parents made an arranged marriage with a different person and the date was set for her wedding.

Simoun planned to start his revolution on this wedding day. Simoun presented a lamp with dynamite inside. This will furnish the signal to attack and to blow up the whole house and all of it. He told this to Basilio. Isagani stood in front of the house, hoping to catch one farewell glimpse of his sweetheart. Basilio saw him and tried to lead him away before the explosion. Basilio told him the truth. Isagani did not want the death of his sweetheart, ran into the house, seized the lamp and threw it into the river. He too jumped into the river and committed suicide. The plot of Simoun was revealed and he had to escape. He was shot and wounded. He died in the house of a Filipino farmer. On his death-bed he confessed to a priest his real name and story. When the priest said: "God will forgive you Senor Simoun, we can see His infinite mercy", he asked back the priest why God did not help people like him who had struggled for the independence of his own people and his country. Then, he died.<sup>61</sup>

## **Chapter (12)**

In this chapter, it was written how Jose Rizal had to worry about his relatives in the Philippines. He thought the Spanish authorities in the Philippines would take action against his relatives there because he was in the 'Black List' of the authorities there. He wanted to return to his country; however, he noticed that the revolution would break out soon in the Philippines. That's why he went to Hong Kong instead and worked there as ophthalmologist and he was earning well. He had a plan that his parents and closest relatives should immigrate to British Borneo, however he realized that the Spanish authorities would not let his relatives leave the Philippines. During this time, the Filipino Consulate in Hong Kong forwarded him with a passport an invitation letter from the Spanish governor-general in the Philippines with the promise that he won't be arrested if he would return to the country. He sailed back to the Philippines with his younger sister Lucia on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1892. When they arrived in Manila Lucia was accused of possessing an anti-government letter with her, however, they were allowed to move freely. He established an organisation called 'The Filipino Association' with the aim for the unification of all Filipinos.

---

<sup>60</sup> In the original story Isagani spoke with the greatest frankness to Father Fernandez, a Dominican friar, and one of the instructors at the university

<sup>61</sup> Here, I had to compare with U Ohn Khin's book as well as the original book in the English version. Only after that, I translated accordingly because it was not clearly written in the book reviewer's version.

The rules and regulations for the members as well as aims and motives of the association were declared. In the eyes of the Spanish authorities, this association was a rebel association. When the association grew the government arrested Jose Rizal. They wanted to arrest him long time ago but now they got a chance. Despite of his arrest the association got more and more members. That's why Jose Rizal was kept in Fort Santiago at first and later he was transferred to the town called Dapitan, in the Mindanao Island and put under house arrest. All orders came directly from the governor-general.

Jose Rizal never trusted the Spanish authorities in the Philippines. Hence, he left two farewell letters by his friends in Hong Kong before he came back to the Philippines. In case of his assassination or death penalty, his friends should publish them. While he was in Dapitan he had to stay in the house of the governor or commandant. During this time he read and wrote, studied the culture of the natives of that island, collected the instruments used by the natives and observed the wild animals of that island. In his free time he taught children, treated the patients with eye diseases. He donated the money he earned to bring in water and electricity supply for that town. He bought some plot and built a school for poor people. Whenever he wrote to his sister he wrote intentionally some sentences in German, English and French so that the police could not understand. Spanish authorities wanted to know what the aim of Dr. Jose Rizal was and he told them 7 points. These are the most important needs of his country and people.

This was his life as a prisoner.

### **Chapter (13)**

While he was under house arrest in Dapitan he requested the government that his mother should be allowed to come and stay with him, but his request was turned down. During this time one American mechanic, whom he knew in Hong Kong, came to visit him with the purpose of getting eye treatment from Dr. Rizal. This American had an adopted daughter, an Irish lady called Josephine. While he was treating the eye disease of this American mechanic Dr. Rizal and Josephine became lovers.<sup>62</sup> There were also developments in politics. A man called Bonifacio established a secret organisation called the Katipunan. After staying four years in Dapitan he

---

<sup>62</sup> Both in U Ohn Khin's and in the Original English Version it was stated clearly that Jose Rizal and Josephine Bracken got married.

heard the news that there was an epidemic in Cuba. He applied for the position of a doctor to go there. He was allowed to go there and he left the Philippines on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1896. While he was in Barcelona the Katipunan started the revolution. He was arrested and sent back to the Philippines. His old friend Dr. Antonio Regidor<sup>63</sup> planned to rescue him when the steamer should reach Singapore, then British soil, however it failed. On 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1896 Dr. Jose Rizal was sent to Fort Santiago, accompanied by many armed guards. He was accused of high treason. He knew that he would be sentenced with the capital punishment; hence, he composed a poem with the title 'My last farewell'. He sent that poem to his mother and sisters by putting it inside a lamp which he received as a present from a friend. On 29<sup>th</sup> December he was sentenced to death by a firing squad within 24 hours. In that night he spent his time praying, reading, talking jollily with the guards. He did not sleep and he had no sign of fear.

At seven o'clock the soldiers came and tightly bound his arms behind his back and took him to the Bagumbayan Field. He was 37 years and 28 days old.<sup>64</sup> While he was walking to the Killing

---

<sup>63</sup> Both in U Ohn Khin's Version and in the Original English Version it was written clearly that Jose Rizal was arrested on the ship while the ship was still in Suez because the ship's captain received a cable from Manila. A fellow Filipino passenger called Pedro P. Roxas noticed their danger. He stepped ashore at Singapore while the ship was at Singapore harbour and advised Jose Rizal to follow his example, however, the sturdy advocate of the Philippine independence refused. He was taken to Barcelona as a prisoner and in the same afternoon he was sent back to the Philippines as a prisoner by another ship.

<sup>64</sup>It is not correct! I don't know how the book reviewer calculated the age of Dr. Rizal. I wonder whether the book reviewer had read U Ohn Khin's book properly!

In fact, Jose Rizal was born on 19th June 1861 at Calamba. He was killed on 30th December 1896. Hence, he was 36 years 6 months and 11 days old.

In U Ohn Khin's version Dr. Rizal was 36 years old at that time and he had served his country for 24 years. Also in page 283, where it was written: „Exactly 37 years and 28 days ago, a Filipino patriot called John Brown walked on the same path. He was taken to Bagumbayan Field to be executed in the same way.

However, in the Original English Version, Page 305, where it was written: „Thirty Seven Years and twenty eight days before, another martyr had gone forth to his death with the same clear-souled, untroubled calm. „This is a beautiful country,' said John Brown, Osawatomie Brown, as with the sheriff he drove to the execution place; "I never noticed it before."

At page X of the Prefatory Note of the original English Version, the authors of the book wrote: „The hope to make available to American readers the story of the great man and national hero of the people the United States has undertaken to lead to national independence“. Besides, a sheriff can be found only in the United States but not in the Philippines. Apart from that, the name Osawatomie Brown sounds more African American rather than a Filipino. It can, therefore, be concluded that the reference to John Brown was the authors' way of showing their readers that Rizal's calm acceptance of his execution is comparable to that of the other man familiar to them.

It appears that U Ohn Khin even failed to understand this point and thought that John Brown was a Filipino. Most probably, the book reviewer did not read U Ohn Khin's book thoroughly and bluffed that Jose Rizal was 37 years and 27 days old when he was murdered!

By the way, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Prize Laureate and the most famous political prisoner in Burma, was born on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1945. Hence, according to astrology, she is also in the same Zodiac as Jose Rizal and now having very similar destiny like Dr. Jose Rizal. What a coincidence!

Field he talked about what he saw in that area when he was young. There were many people as spectators. The Spanish government was afraid of that public and they let artillery regiments to prevent the people who could storm, raid and rescue Dr. Rizal. He requested the officer of the firing squad to shoot him in the front; however, the officer replied that they had to shoot him in the back according to the order. Then, he requested not to be shot at the head but direct to the heart and he be permitted to stand. These requests were granted. After that he said fair well to his lawyer and the two priests and shook their hands. When a doctor checked his pulse it was normal and his face was also very calm. After that he told the firing squad that he was ready. Then, eight soldiers fired simultaneously. Before he fell down he still could turn his body so that he fell on his back with his face upward.

A year, eight months and seventeen days after the killing of Dr. Jose Rizal, Spanish rule in the Philippines totally collapsed. The Filipino people removed his body from an unknown burial place and reburied him as a national hero. Every year, they honour him by celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> December as Rizal Day.<sup>65</sup>

In this way Jose Rizal sacrificed his life for the independence of his nation.

**Analysis:**

This book is about Jose Rizal and was published during the British Colonial Era. At that time, no doubt, the author wanted to agitate Burmese youth for the Burmese independence struggle. It was the author's main aim and purpose at that time. Even nowadays, this book can be recommended as a good biography of a national hero who had sacrificed his life for the independence struggle of his nation. This book can catch the attention of people who want to follow his example and struggle like him for their own country's development. It is a good book, however, some interpretations, style of writing, syntax and terminologies used by the author were weak to point out the real meanings and facts.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> In page 288 of U Ohn Khin's book and in page 329 of the Original version, the authors stated, after the revolution, the Filipino Legislature sought to bestow a pension on Jose Rizal's mother. She declined the pension on the ground that it would lower the standard of patriotism observed in her family. The Rizals, she said, did not serve Filipinos for money.

<sup>66</sup> I have a different opinion. The late U Ohn Khin's Burmese and interpretation was of much higher standard than the Burmese, syntax and interpretation of the book reviewer. U Ohn Khin's Burmese usages may be old fashioned and too poetic for some Burmese nowadays because he wrote this book 70 years ago with the style then. At that time

#### **4. U Thet Tun: Report on the Translation of the Biography of Jose Rizal**

One of the earliest Nagani publications, numbered 6 in 1938, was the biography of Dr. Jose Rizal by Mojo (pen name of the veteran journalist U Ohn Khin, husband of the well-known authoress and founder of Dagon Magazine, Dagon Khin Khin Lay).

U Ohn Khin was an ardent nationalist and founded the wartime daily called *Bama Khit* or the Burmese Era. Like most of his contemporaries, his only foreign language was English, as betrayed by his transliteration of the Filipino hero's first name as Jose and not the Spanish pronunciation of Hose.

In his translation, Mojo did not mention the name of the book he was translating but obviously it must be a book in English, either an original or a translation from Spanish. So one need to do a little detective work on the book Mojo translated. Among the basic biographies of Rizal, the oldest is VUDA Y ESCRITOS DEL DR JOSE RIZAL by Wenceslao E Retana (Madrid 1907). Since no English translation is mentioned, it must be ruled out. In 1938, the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines made two awards to two biographies. One was BIOGRAFIA

---

Burmese vocabularies were not yet advanced and developed. U Nu, a former Nagani author, who became the first prime minister of the independent Burma, supported to establish "the Burma Translation Society" and many scholars were invited to help. Starting from that time Burmese vocabularies developed slowly and slowly up to the modern stage.

Here, I have to point out bluntly, some of the modern usages totally and some words partially deviated from the original meaning. One specific example: In the Burmese Royal Army, the highest ranking officer was called Sitthugyi or Bo Hmu, hence, field marshal. Maha Bandoola was titled Bo Hmu Wungyi Thodo Thudama Maha Bandoola. Normally, the title Thado was conferred only to the princes and not to the commoners. Maha Bandoola was the only exception in the whole history. His deputy, the second in command was Myawaddy Mingyi U Sa. His rank was Sitkei, hence, general. Only the third man was called Bo Gyoke, thus, Lt. Gen. Burmese army, jargons and terminologies vanished after the collapse of the Kingdom. English jargons and terminologies were used in the army during the colonial era. Many Burmese, except scholars, were no more familiar with these terms. As a result, when BIA, BDA, PBF etc. etc. were established, the wrongly translated words came into being. Hence, nowadays, Bo Gyoke means general and Bo Hmu means major! Hence, it totally deviated from the original meaning. Assuming, a person who does not know Burmese history thoroughly and using an unscholarly Burmese as an informant, or using some cheap dictionaries, he/she would have translated Bo Hmu Maha Bandoola as Major Maha Bandoola. Then, the real scholars would have to exclaim ,Alas, after almost 200 years of the death of our beloved Sitthugyi Maha Bandoola, he was unfortunately demoted from the rank of a Field Marshal to a Major by this stupid person!"

DE RIZAL by Rafael Palma translated into English by R. Ozaeta. The other was THE GREAT MALAYAN by Carlos Quirino who later became the post war Director of Public Libraries in the Philippines. Chronologically, the latter is more likely, but Mojo might well have chosen some other work in English to which he had easier access.

The special aim and intended impact of the book at the time of publication was inscribed on the cover of the book itself. It says: "This book will change the mind of every reader". It also says: "The author vowed suicide if after his seven books, his country has not yet won its independence. After two books he was killed by the (Spanish) Government. He courageously asked the firing squad to be shot from the front."

Mojo dedicated his translation to the people of Burma with the following words:

"I was educated at schools constructed from revenues which were extracted from your hard-earned incomes. You have therefore been my benefactors. But the education I received made me fit only to serve another nation and not mine. Knowing your sacrifice, I have endeavoured in my higher studies to repay my debt to you. May this work on the life story of Dr. Jose Rizal be the beacon of light in your struggle for freedom and wellbeing. May this be the first step in the fostering of noble souls like Dr. Jose Rizal to liberate you from misery."

Throughout the translation Mojo used fiery language to inspire the potential freedom fighters. To describe the ignoble spirit and misdeeds of the Spanish oppressors, he used the language of mockery. Mojo's translation was direct and not adapted, because he was writing about his idol whose intellect he admired. Like Rizal, Mojo was a fiery writer and a courageous journalist. Friend or foe he would not spare his criticism if he thought something was not right. The most glaring example was when his friend and long-time colleague U Nu formed his Cabinet after winning a landslide victory in 1960 Elections. Mojo's newspaper carried a headline "U Nu's *Mepya-pasoe*" (well-worn longyi) meaning the same old uneducated leadership. As he predicted, Nu's government soon fell into disarray giving rise to a coup d'etat by General Ne Win. And at the first press conference given by the General, Mojo refused to stand up on the General's entry which made the General stomp out of the room forever spoiling his relations with the Press.

The impact of Mojo's book on a thirteen year old student of a nationalist school who I was at the time can be easily imagined. As I told a Filipino audience of Japan Alumni in 2001 in Manila, "Jose Rizal was the first Filipino I knew from a Nagani book.

On reading Mojo's translation in Burmese I became a more ardent nationalist. Then when I was able to read the biography in English (in fact while I was studying in wartime Japan), I became an

internationalist. Then in 1971, when I attended a Colombo Plan Conference in Manila as an adviser, I was given Leon Ma. Guerrero's *The First Filipino* as a gift for my assistance by Letitia Shahani (sister of President Ramos and later UN Assistant Secretary General). Reading this prize-winning literary work rekindled my admiration for the Filipino hero. Then in 1984 as Director of Asia at Unesco Headquarters I was finally able to pay tribute to my lifelong idol when a Paris house which Rizal frequented during his European sojourns was dedicated to his memory."

#### **4.1. Commentary on the report by U Thet Tun by Dietrich Schilling**

At first I would like to mention that this report does very well in making me curious to read the book.

The “Report on the Translation of Biography of Jose Rizal” gives very interesting hints on the translator Mojo and his personal views and intentions but for my opinion misses a little bit to work out the contents of the book itself; as a potentially reader I would appreciate to learn more about this.

For my opinion some confusion also is left concerning the original book that was translated by Mojo. Should it not be possible to either confirm or rule out the two titles mentioned (Rafael Palma/R. Ozaeta respectively Carlos Quirino) by comparing the English and Burmese versions? It could be of some importance to verify the true original because having done this one could answer the question whether Mojo really presented a translation true to the original or maybe added any personal views or even tried to intensify the intentions of the original book by his own ideas.

Reading about the inscription on the cover of the book saying “This book will change the mind of every reader” I feel very curious about knowing a little bit more about in which way the reader shall be influenced and what he should understand?

The paragraph concerning the language used by Mojo gives a very good description of the author himself, and the personal assessment by the reviewer of the book very clearly points out the impact of Mojo's translation – but still leaves open the intentions of the original book.

Dietrich Schilling

## **5. *Nagani News*, Vol. 1, 2 (1938), pp. 31-32; Book Review by Ye Ye Tauk**

Biography of Dr. Jose Rizal, the great patriot of the Philippines, was published by the Nagani Book Club in May this year. The author Moe Gyo wrote in the preface that he owed to his motherland (Burma) and her people a lot, therefore, he wanted to repay his debts to his nation by writing this book.

He started, how Magellan ‘discovered’ the Philippines. After that both Spain and Portugal claimed the Philippines to be their territory. Finally, for no reason the natives of the Philippines became automatically the subjects of the king of Spain.

Since his child hood, the young Jose Rizal noticed that his compatriots were unfairly ruled by foreign rulers and their lives were like prisoners. Filipinos had to suffer because most of them lacked education. He made a resolution to rescue his nation and compatriots from that kind of ‘prison camp’. He studied hard and passed the Bachelor of Arts Examination when he was only 16.

At the age of 18, he got the First Prize in the competition among Filipino poets with the poem entitled “To the Philippine Youth”<sup>67</sup>. After that he participated with an assumed name in another poetic tourney. He won the First Prize again, however, when he was discovered to be a ‘Coloured’ the laurel was taken from him and bestowed upon a ‘White’. He was very talented in writing, painting and sculpture. For his further studies, he had to go abroad secretly.

While he was abroad he wrote the novel “Noli Me Tangere”, in which he described how cruel the colonial government and the friars were and how his relatives and compatriots had to suffer. He sent his novel to the Philippines. Did the novel held the interest of the Filipinos? The answer was: Of course, much more than he expected. At that time, the Filipinos who could read and write became very popular, they had to read loud and many people came and listened because his novel books were very rare in the Philippines. Even for this kind of reading and listening, some Filipinos had to work as scouts and watchmen so that they could warn the reader and listeners when government surveillances came. The government issued warnings that the owner of that

---

<sup>67</sup> Original was in Spanish „La Juventud Filipina”

book as well as readers and listeners would get punishment, either imprisonment or sent to exile.

The Filipinos revolted one hundred times during three hundred years of Spanish rule. Finally, the Spanish government sentenced Dr. Rizal to death for no reasons. He was unfairly killed. Almost two years after his death the Filipinos liberated their nation from Spanish rule.

The author wrote about the paintings, sculptures of Rizal and his two novels, “Noli Me Tangere” and “El Filibusterismo” which agitated the Filipino Revolution. He mentioned that Dr. Rizal could speak, read and write in more than ten languages. The author wrote the details of Rizal’s biography from birth to death, how he cared for his health, his tragic love story. The author mentioned that Dr. Rizal was so brave and calm even just before he was illegitimately killed by the cruel Spanish Rulers. The author praised Dr. Rizal’s last poem which he composed in his last night before the assassination.<sup>68</sup>

Nowadays many good books are published in Burma. The publishing of Dr. Rizal’s Biography will be very useful for all Burmese. It is most welcome! For many book worms, I should say, it is like the Burmese proverb: “He, who is looking for sweet meat, accidentally finds the Honey Pot”. So, my fellow Burmese People, don’t hesitate, make your tongues ready to taste the honey! We hope and wish you could taste the honey! We expect something out of you!

---

<sup>68</sup> In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, during the Pagan Dynasty of Burma, the Minister Ananda Thuriya faced an unfair death penalty. In his last minutes he requested the henchmen to allow him to compose a poem. He wrote a poem of four paragraphs called ‘Dhammata’ meaning Nature. After the execution the henchmen presented the poem to the king. The king realized his mistake immediately and pardoned him, unfortunately, it was too late. The absolute monarch regretted this and made a new decree that, even if the prisoners were sentenced to death by the king, the sentence should not be implemented immediately but should be suspended for a month to nine weeks to give prisoners the chance to request for a clemency during this period. This poem became a masterpiece in Burmese literature.

## 6. Nagani News, Vol. 1, 2 (1938), pp. 33-34: My Last Farewell

The six poems written by Martyr Rizal just before he was shot dead by the firing squad<sup>69</sup>

Freely translated and composed appropriately<sup>70</sup> into a Burmanized Poem<sup>71</sup>

By an unknown author<sup>72</sup>

These Poems should be read as an appendix of the Biography of Rizal, published by the Nagani Book Club in May, 1938

Freely translated back into English in Prose Form by U Khin Maung Saw, Berlin<sup>73</sup>

1. My beloved Island embraced by the Southern Sunlight, you deserve to be called the genuine Pearl of the Pubhbha Videha<sup>74</sup> Sea! The land I adore! Now, I say farewell to you

---

<sup>69</sup> In fact, Dr. Rizal wrote these poems in the night before he was killed and not just before he was shot dead as the way Burmese composer claimed. Since Dr. Rizal was one of the few Idols for Nagani authors who agitated the early steps of Burmese Independence Struggle, I have to conclude, this composer wanted to get the attention of Burmese readers and wrote intentionally, just to compare Dr. Rizal with the famous Minister Ananta Thuriya of Pagan (Bagan) Dynasty who wrote a poem with four paragraphs, just a few minutes before he was executed.

<sup>70</sup> Dr. Jose Rizal composed these poems in the Spanish language. Charles Edward Russell and E. B. Rodriguez translated them into English. The other English Version, in rime, was excellently done by Charles Derbyshire. The Burmese writer translated freely and composed appropriately into Burmese poem. I translated these Burmese poems back into English. Hence, I presume, more or less there may be some variations from Dr. Rizal's original version.

<sup>71</sup> Traditionally, Burmese people like dramatic and emotional poems, songs and acts so that a drama or a play would enchant the public. There is a word called "Zat-nar" meaning to build up to a tragic climax or to touch the hearts of the audience by a faultless performance. Indians like those styles much more than Burmese do. After the Indian Immigration Waves in the Early Colonial Era, many Indians settled in the big cities in the coastal areas. Rangoon became an Indian City rather than a Burmese City. Many theatre troupes wanted to enchant and attract Indian spectators. Hence, Burmese Theatre had been more or less influenced by the Indian type, which is too emotional and dramatic, much more "Zat-nar" than the normal Burmese style. Some characters of plays and dramas, whenever they had some troubles or made the rulers angry, just kneeled down or some times rolled on the floor and cried by chanting such expressions such as "Mercy please!" or "Please be kind" etc., even if they were war heroes or persons possessing supernatural powers. This kind of scenes seemed so awkward for the Burmese nationalists who were taught traditionally that a man should not cry, a hero must face death bravely etc. etc. Because of that, a new Burmese slang 'Kala Mu Mu' meaning 'overacting like an Indian' was invented by ultra-nationalists. Since these poems were written in the 1930's, and those over-acted dramas were "a la mode" at that time, it cannot be ruled out that the author wanted to dramatize or make "Zat-nar" added some emotional words according to the Burmese taste and emotions then. There were some terms from Buddhist literature, too. Dr. Jose Rizal was a Christian. No doubt, it varied from the original version! Hence, I took the liberty to name the Burmese rimes as "Burmanized Poem".

<sup>72</sup> The name of the author was not stated, however, because of the suggestion: "These Poems should be read as an appendix of the Biography of Rizal, published by the Nagani Book Club in May", it should be presumed that these poems too were written by the same author of the Biography of Rizal, U Ohn Khin with penname Moe Gyo. The term "freely translated" and composed appropriately were used by the author of the Burmese Version in Rime.

<sup>73</sup> Though these poems may vary from the original version in some aspects, I have to admit that these poems were written in a high standard and classical Burmese. Unfortunately, my English is not profound enough to translate these poems in rime and as in the same standard as in Burmese.

<sup>74</sup> According to Buddhist Cosmology, Pubhbha Videha is the Eastern Island. There are four big oceans surrounding Mount Meru. Each ocean has a gigantic Island and many small Isles. Hence, here the author used the Buddhist term

calmly. I dare to sacrifice my life for the wealth and the freedom of my native land. I am happy to die for you. Now I will go before you would again become the Paradise Island where I could enjoy my life properly<sup>75</sup>. Though I am still young, I have no fear to give my life for all of you, your happiness and your prosperous future. From the ancient times to now, many heroes had laid down their lives in the fierce battles, without retreating and surrendering. People sacrificed their lives for their nation willingly either in the battle fields or on the gallows of the enemies regardless of victory, whether laurel and cypress would be bestowed or not. Now, faint lights of the dawn are appearing slowly from the east and breaking into the darkness. The darkness will be disappearing step by step. Very soon, the call of Death will come which I will face bravely!

2. Dreams, positive dreams, I have some dreams! The distance is still far, however, I know that my wish and goal will be achieved one day, so, I won't mind that I have to die; it will be a noble death. I pray that my wishes and goals will come into being in the near future. I won't see that anymore because I am leaving. My motherland, I pay homage to you and I would like to express my gratitude and farewell to you. I repeat that I have no fear in front of death because I am sure that my goals and wishes will be fulfilled sooner or later. My beloved motherland, I am so proud and happy to be one of your dutiful sons. Now I am breathing my last airs of your soil and I will take this joyful spirit to the end of the world. Though my body will lie down in the earth forever and covered by the grass, consider please that my soul is in your bosom. Some flowers may bloom between the deep rich grasses, you may lay your lips there and kiss the flowers- It will be my soul.
3. In evening masses, when you are praying for everybody, please also pray for me whose body will already be lying in the grave. Pray also for those who were taken by Maranha<sup>76</sup> (those who go down to death). Pray more for the freedom of many people who remain to suffer torture in prisons. Pray for the bitter grief of our mothers, our wives and our orphans. Pray too for yourselves, on the way to your final redemption.

---

“the Pubhbha Videha Sea” just to promote the style of the rime, however, in reality he meant to say the Orient Ocean.

<sup>75</sup> The composer translated indirectly into Burmese. Jose Rizal's version was: “Farewell to the plundered Paradise”!

<sup>76</sup> Maranha is the “God of Death”. In Burmese belief, if a person has to die, the God Marana will send his subordinate and messenger called Yamado Yamaga to bring that person to him. This kind of belief is more or less the influence of Hinduism. Buddha never mentioned about that! Nor Theravada Buddhism accepts this kind of beliefs.

4. The night is dark and quiet. Very soon, the silence of the night will be broken by the rays of the dawn. I am waiting for that time. When I am dead and lying in a grave, leave me alone, please don't disturb me from the "deep sleep". The meaning of death is too difficult to define, don't try to find out. If now and then, if you hear the sweet melody of a song and the playing of a harp near my grave, please consider, it is my voice and my playing.
5. One day, my unknown grave will be soiled and diminished. Some peasants might plough on it, the earth will be open and my remains will be mixed with the earth and soil. Many people will forget me, but I am not sad for that. I shall be air in your streets and I shall be space in your meadows. I shall be a vibrant speech in your ears. I shall be fragrance and bright colour for you. Music and songs, as long as they remain, for ever repeating my messages.
6. My fellow compatriots, all of us know that the burdens we had and have to bear are as high as "Mount Meru"<sup>77</sup> and as deep as Maha Samuddra<sup>78</sup>. My beloved Philippine Isles, Paradise by nature, my beloved friends and relatives, my sweetheart, all loved ones, I cannot stay anymore and I am leaving you, adieu once again! The place where I am going rules with justice; no tyranny, no one can bully and torture others. It is the real paradise where God is the Ruler. Goodbye, my dear parents, brothers and sisters, dear friends, soon, I will be released from the burdens<sup>79</sup> which I had to suffer in my life. Don't feel sad for me but please consider that dying is being free from the burdens of life<sup>80</sup>. You should thank (God) for my burdens cannot be extended anymore. Farewell, beloved ones, farewell, I am leaving!

---

<sup>77</sup> Mount Meru is the highest mountain in Buddhist Cosmology. It may be more or less comparable to Mt. Olympus in the Greek Mythology. The Tavatimsa Heaven, the second level of the six abodes of Buddhists Devas, which is also the "Kingdom" of Indra Deva or Thagyamin supposed to be at the crest of Mt. Meru. The Devas of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Abodes are his 'subjects'. It is like the way the peak of Mt. Olympus supposed to be the residence of Zeus, the king of the Greek Gods. The other gods were his subordinates. When Burmese want to emphasize a very huge amount or infinite term, they usually compare it with the height of Mt. Meru.

<sup>78</sup> Maha Samuddra means Great Ocean. The depth of Maha Samuddra is the other alternative comparison for a very huge amount or infinite term.

<sup>79</sup> I translated appropriately. The author used the Burmese word 'wut' which is the corruption of the Pali word "Vipaka" meaning the result or effect or consequences of one's past deeds of the previous lives.

<sup>80</sup> I believe, the author of the Burmese poems took some ideas of His Holiness the Abbot of Zeebani, the then Sangha Raja (the highest order among the Buddhist monks in a country) of the Burmese Kingdom, who composed a poem in 1886, just after the British annexation: "We lost our king, we lost our nation, we lost our Capital City, we lost all. For us, it is better to die, rather than surviving and living under these situations, as subjects of the foreigners!"

**ENGLISH VERSION OF RUSSEL AND RODRIGUEZ**

Land I adore, Farewell! Thou land of the southern sun's choosing.  
Pearl of the Orient Seas! Our forfeited Garden of Eden,  
Joyous, I yield up for thee my sad life, and were it far brighter,  
Young, or rose-strewn, for thee and thy happiness still would I give it.  
Far a field, in the din and rush of maddening battle,  
Others have laid down their lives, nor wavered, nor paused, in the giving.  
What matters way or place-the cypress, the lily, the laurel,  
Gibbet or open field, the sword or inglorious torture-  
When 't is the hearth and the country that call for the life's immolation?  
Dawn's faint lights bar the east; she smiles through the cowl of the darkness,  
Just as I die ...

Vision I followed from afar, desire that spurred on and consumed me!  
Greetings! my parting soul cries and greeting again! O my country!  
Beautiful is it to fall, that the vision may rise to fulfilment  
Giving my life for thy life, and breathing thine air in the death-throe;  
Sweet to eternally sleep in thy lap, O land of enchantment!

If in the deep rich grass that covers my rest in thy bosom,  
Some day thou seest upspring a lowly tremulous blossom,  
Lay there thy lips-'t is my soul! ....

And if at eventide a soul for my tranquil sleep prayeth,  
Pray thou, O my fatherland! For my peaceful reposing;  
Pray for those who go down to death through unspeakable torments;  
Pray for those who remain to suffer torture in prison;  
Pray for the bitter grief of our mothers, our wives, our orphans;  
Oh, pray too, for thyself, on the way to thy final redemption!

When our still dwelling-place wraps night's dusky mantle about her,

Leaving the dead alone with the dead, to watch till the morning,  
Break not our rest, and seek not to lay death's mystery open.  
If now and then thou shouldst hear the string of a lute or a zithern,  
Mind is the hand, dear country, and mine is the voice that is singing.

When my tomb, that all have forgot, no cross nor stone marketh,  
There let the laborer guide his plow, there cleave the earth open.  
So shall my ashes at last be one with thy hills and thy valleys.  
Little't will matter, then my country, that thou shouldst forget me!  
I shall be air in thy streets, and I shall be space I thy meadows;  
I shall be vibrant speech in thine ears, shall be fragrance and color,  
Light and shout, and loved song, for ever repeating my message.

Idolized fatherland, thou crown and deep of my sorrows,  
Lovely Philippine Isles, once again adieu! I am leaving  
All with thee-my friends, my love. Where I go are no tyrants;  
There one dies not for the cause of his faith; there God is the ruler.  
Farewell, father and mother and brother, dear friends of the fireside!  
Thankful ye should be for me that I rest and at the end of the long day.  
Farewell, sweet, from stranger's land-my joy and my comrade!  
Farewell, dear ones, farewell! To die is to rest from our labors!

#### **ENGLISH VERSION IN RIME BY CHARLES DERBYSHIRE**

Farewell, dear fatherland, clime of the sun caress'd,  
Pearl of the Orient seas, our Eden lost!  
Gladly now I go to give thee this faded life's best,  
And were it brighter, fresher, or more blest,  
Still would I give it thee, nor count the cost.

On the field of battle, 'mid the frenzy of fight,  
Others have given their lives, without doubt or heed;  
The place matters not-cypress or laurel or lily white,  
Scaffold or open plain, combat or martyrdom's plight,  
'T is ever the same, to serve our home and country's need.

I die just when I see the dawn break,  
Though the gloom of night, to herald the day;  
And if color is lacking my blood thou shalt take,  
Pour'd out at need for thy dear sake,  
To dye with crimson the waking way.

My dreams, when life first opened to me,  
My dreams, when the hopes of youth beat high,  
Were to see thy lov'd face, O gem of the Orient sea,  
From gloom and grief, from care and sorrow face;  
No blush on thy bow, no tear in thine eye.

Dream of my life, my living and burning desire,  
All hail! Cries the soul that is now to take flight;  
All hail! And sweet it is for thee to expire;  
To die for thy sake, that thou mayst aspire;  
And sleep in thy bosom eternity's long night.

If over my grave some day thou seest grow,  
In the grassy sod, a humble flower,  
Draw it to thy lips and kiss my soul so,  
While I may feel on my brow in the cold tomb below  
The touch of the tenderness, thy breadth's warm power.

Let the moon beam over me soft and serene,  
Let the dawn shed over me its radiant flashes,

Let the wind with sad lament over my keen;  
And if on my cross a bird should be seen,  
Let it trill there its hymn of peace to my ashes.

Let the sun draw the vapours up the sky,  
And heavenward in purity bear my tardy protest;  
Let some kind of soul o'er my untimely fate sigh,  
And in the still evening a prayer be lifted on high,  
From thee, O my country, that in God I may rest.

Pray for all those that hapless have died,  
For all who have suffered the unmeasur'd pain;  
For our mothers that bitterly their woes have cried,  
For widows and orphans, for captives by torture tried;  
And then for thyself that redemption thou mayst gain.

And when the dark night wraps the graveyard around,  
With only the dead in their vigil to see;  
Break not my repose or the mystery profound,  
And perchance thou mayst hear a sad hymn resound;  
'T is I, O my country, raising a song unto thee.

When even my grave is remembered no more,  
Unmark'd by never a cross nor a stone;  
Let the plow sweep through it, the spade turn it o'er,  
That my ashes may carpet thy earthly floor,  
Before into nothingness at last they are blown.

Then will oblivion bring to me no care,  
As over thy vales and plains I sweep;  
Throbbing and cleansed in thy space and air,  
With color and light, with song and lament I fare,

Ever repeating the faith that I keep.

My fatherland ador'd, that sadness to my sorrow lends,  
Beloved Philippines, hear now my last good-by!  
I give thee all: parents and kindred and friends;  
For I go where no slave before the oppressor bends,  
Where faith can never kill, and God reigns e'er on high!

Farewell to you all, from my soul torn away,  
Friends of my childhood in the home dispossessed!  
Give thanks that I rest from the wearisome day!  
Farewell to thee, too sweet friend that lightened my way;  
Beloved creatures all, farewell! In death there is rest!

## 7. Ba Choe, U Wizara<sup>81</sup>

Translation and footnotes: Georg Noack

In Myanmar, in the state prison at Insein there is a piece of land the government cannot overwhelm, cannot administer and has no opportunity to possess. This piece of land is *Sīmā* - ground.<sup>82</sup> *Sīmā* - ground is not in the possession of the government, but is ground owned by the Buddha. Members of the Sangha imprisoned for political reasons conduct *uposatha*<sup>83</sup> ceremonies according to the Buddha's commandments there on full moon and new moon days when they are four monks or more. If they are not four, but only two or three, they can conduct a *gana uposatha*<sup>84</sup> ceremony. And if there is only one monk, he can hold *adhi□□hana uposatha*<sup>85</sup>. That means a personal [*puggala*] *uposatha*. Because of their love for the *sāsana*<sup>86</sup> because of their love for the religion, those monks that have to go to prison received the permit to wear their robes in prison and conduct *uposatha* ceremonies.<sup>87</sup> They can now follow the commandments of the Buddha. Such opportunities were they given. Not because anybody had granted it to wishing to promote the *sāsana*. U Wizara, a noble real son of the Buddha, is a great martyr. Not being granted the opportunity to practice according to the Buddha's commandments he decided not to eat any food excelling in the virtues of resolution [*adhitthānā pāramī*], forbearance [*khanti-pāramī*] and morality [*sīla-pāramī*] as few humans can. As he did not take nourishment for 166 days, he left from the human abodes that had not been worthy of him for the abode of the gods where he was sent to the palace of the gods of *tusita*<sup>88</sup> by the gods who protect the *sāsana*. The people of Myanmar should not forget that it was only because U Wizara's taking great risk that the monks are now permitted to do so [i.e. practice *uposatha* and wear their robes in Insein, G.N.]. The yak [*cāmarī*] would not stand a single hair to be torn out, if it was caught in a thorny shrub, it would rather stand still and die. U Wizara made an example for the rights monks ought to have according to the commandments of the Buddha and preserved his own morality. For the Myanmar people to understand this example he admonished us shortly before he died to 'remain

---

<sup>81</sup> Nagani News vol 1, No 6 (August 1938) p. 1-2.

<sup>82</sup> The area of a Buddhist ordination hall.

<sup>83</sup> Conduct or hold *uposatha* is used in Myanmar language as meaning "monks reciting the *pātimokkha*, the rules for the monks, on full moon and new moon days"

<sup>84</sup> An *upsatha*-ceremony performed by less than four monks.

<sup>85</sup> An *upsatha*-ceremony performed by a single monk.

<sup>86</sup> (Buddhist) religion.

<sup>87</sup> Alternative translation: Those monks that have to go to prison because of their love for the *sāsana*, because of their love for the religion.

<sup>88</sup> The highest of heaven according to the Buddhist cosmology.

virtuous' so that even when the world perishes, we shall still remember. Who could forget such a great martyr? Who would want to forget him? U Wizara showed us clearly the meaning of the saying "he who takes pains will reap rewards". The more pains we take, the more rewards we will get. Now, on the second day of the Tawthalin<sup>89</sup> moon we experience the ninth anniversary of U Wizara's great day.<sup>90</sup> According to the law of auspiciousness saying *pujāca pujaneyyana*□<sup>91</sup> one should revere those who deserve to be revered. Everybody revere him! Everybody intensely revere him! Be all virtuous! Very virtuous! McSwiney<sup>92</sup> sacrificed his life and Ireland is independent now! José Rizal sacrificed his life and the Philippine islands have achieved independence. In Myanmar, where the venerable U Wizara sacrificed his life, we do still do not have freedom. But think about whose responsibility is that? Now at the venerable U Wizara's day let us resolve to follow his admonishment! Let us, all men of Myanmar, be virtuous.

Ba Cho

---

<sup>89</sup> The sixth month of the Burmese calendar (September).

<sup>90</sup> U Wizara died on September 19, 1938.

<sup>91</sup> Paying respect to those who deserve respect.

<sup>92</sup> Terence McSwiney (1879-1920) was one of the leaders of the Easter rising in Dublin, Ireland 1916. On August 12, 1920, he was arrested in Dublin for possession of seditious articles and documents. He was summarily tried by court martial on August 16, sentenced to two years' imprisonment in Brixton Prison. In prison, he immediately started a hunger strike. On October 20, 1920, he fell into a coma and died five days later after 74 days on hunger strike. He is often quoted to have said: "It is not those who can inflict the most, but those that can suffer the most who will prevail."

## **8. Khin Maung Saw, A Comparative Study of Rizal's Biography, English Version written by Russell & Rodriguez and the Burmese Version written by Moe Gyo (U Ohn Khin)**

The biography of Dr. Jose Rizal, the National Hero of the Philippines, was published by the Nagani Book Club in the 1930s. The author used his penname Moe Gyo. His given name was U Ohn Khin and he was the Secretary of the Nagani Book Club. He was well known as 'Hiking' or 'Going on Foot',<sup>1</sup> U Ohn Khin at that time.

U Ohn Khin was already a well-known author and journalist when he established the *Bama Khit* (Burma Times) newspaper where he was not only owner but also chief editor. He was the second husband of the famous author Daw *Dagon Khin Khin Lay*<sup>2</sup> who was the owner and chief editor of *Yuwadi Journal*. He was a good friend of Gen. Aung San, the national hero of Burma, U Nu, the first Prime Minister of Burma, U Thant, former UN Secretary General, and many other politicians and military leaders. However, he was never a friend of Gen. Ne Win.

He became a foe of General Ne Win in the early 50's when his *Bama Khit* newspaper, under the guarantee for press freedom given by U Nu's government, published the news of the secret marriage of Gen. Ne Win, the then Commander in Chief of Burma Army, Navy and Air Force, with a married woman by the name of Daw Khin May Than. Daw Khin May Than, also known as Kitty Ba Than, was a nurse and not yet divorced from her first husband. *Bama Khit* also published photos of Gen. Ne Win's first wife Daw Tin Tin and their children and a photo of Dr. Taung Gyi, the husband of Daw Khin May Than, who was then in USA as a Burmese State Scholar. Later, in 1958, when Gen. Ne Win became the Prime Minister of Burma during the Caretaker Government, U Ohn Khin confronted him in his first and last press conference. Subsequently, during the entire Caretaker Government Era, Gen. Ne Win never attended press conferences but let one of his deputies, either Brigadier Aung Gyi or Brigadier Maung Maung, represented him. U Ohn Khin was

---

<sup>1</sup> It is likely that U Ohn Khin did not use public transport whenever he came to office or whenever he visited friends. The patron of almost all Nagani writers, Sayagyi Thakin Kodaw Hmaing, was also well known for not using public transport. While he was working as a professor at the National College, he came to the college and returned back home by foot, walking about 4 miles each way.

<sup>2</sup> Daw *Dagon Khin Khin Lay* was a granddaughter of Wekmasoot Myoza (governor of the town Wekmasoot) during King Midon's and King Thibaw's Era. A Myoza had a right to take the tax of that town as his income. Daw *Dagon Khin Khin Lay* had learnt the stories and traditions of the Burmese Royal Court from her grandfather and wrote some books and articles about them.

one of the first journalists detained by Gen. Ne Win after the 1962 military *coup de tat*.<sup>1</sup>

In the late 50's U Ohn Khin was divorced by Daw *Dagon* Khin Khin Lay<sup>2</sup>. *Bama Khit* closed down and he became the owner and chief editor of the *Moe Gyo* newspaper while Daw *Dagon* Khin Khin Lay continued as the owner and chief editor of the *Yuwadi* newspaper.

The biography of Jose Rizal under discussion was published on May 13, 1938, with 3050 copies in this first edition. The book has 13 chapters and includes a picture of the Filipino people saluting Jose Rizal's Memorial Monument on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December, the Rizal Day.

U Ohn Khin admitted in the Foreword that he had translated the book called 'Jose Rizal'; however, he failed to mention the original title and author. The original book is supposed to be „The Hero of The Filipinos, the Story of Jose Rizal, Poet, Patriot and Martyr,“ by Charles Edward Russell and E. B. Rodriguez, George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., London, 1924.

After reading the original English and U Ohn Khin's „translation“, I have to conclude that U Ohn Khin wrote his Burmese version based on the book of C.E. Russell & E.B. Rodriguez. However, he more or less freely translated what most interested him, omitted some parts of the original version and added his own ideas and comments throughout. Most probably he did not like certain passages or thought they would not be appealing to the Burmese people. I should rather say it was Jose Rizal's biography by Charles Edward Russell and E. B. Rodriguez, „Retold by U Ohn Khin with his own ideas, comments and suggestions to the Burmese people“.

On the front cover of the book, above the title 'Jose Rizal' there is a sentence: “After reading this book, I am sure you will change your mind”. The Foreword carries the title: “I repay my gratitude” and U Ohn Khin started with the sentence: “To my motherland and my dear compatriots of Burma, you are really my benefactors because I was born and grew up on your soil and I was educated in a school built with your taxes. I want to repay you, our motherland and my compatriots, by writing this book”. Furthermore, he added: “My compatriots, people of Burma, I hope and wish this book

---

<sup>1</sup> See Details in “A Journalist, a General and an Army in Burma”, written by U Thaug.

<sup>2</sup>Traditionally, although it is socially stigmatised, a Burmese wife can divorce her husband easily or vice versa. The pair has to divide the property accumulated during their married life equally. The property owned before the marriage remains in the hands of the original owner and does not need to be divided. Neither husband nor wife has a right to claim this property.

may become the guideline of your independence struggle. May this book become a big search light, as bright as the flames of a big volcano, for your way to free your country! I wish my efforts to translate this book would become the first step of the ladder in your independence struggle. May I wish that a person like Dr. Jose Rizal should soon appear in Burma!" With this U Ohn Khin was calling on the people of Burma, then a British colony, to consider Dr. Jose Rizal as an ideal person and to follow his example of sacrificing his own life for the liberation of their motherland from a foreign ruler

On the back cover of this book there was an advertisement of a book called "Socialism, The Ism of the Poor" written by Thakin Soe, one of the Executive Committee members of the Nagani Book Club. Needless to say, most of the former Nagani writers were leftists which was 'a la mode' in most of the British and French colonies then.

U Ohn Khin's work is an excellent book. He looked to the Philippines as a neighbour of Burma and considered the struggle of their national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, for the freedom of the nation from the yoke of the Spaniards as enormously impressive. Through U Ohn Khin's book, Dr. Rizal became a popular hero for almost all of the Burmese youths in the 1930's and also became an idol for the Burmese people of that time. Even in the 50's and 60's there were many stories about Dr. Rizal written by many Burmese authors. In the "Encyclopaedia Birmanica"<sup>1</sup>, under the entry for Dr. Jose Rizal, the publishers included a picture of Dr. Rizal standing bravely in front of the firing squad.

While the English version of Russell & Rodriguez had 17 chapters, and five appendices after the killing of Dr. Rizal, U Ohn Khin's version had only 13 chapters and the last chapter ended when Dr. Jose Rizal was killed by the firing squad. U Ohn Khin added only two more paragraphs:

1. "One year, eight months and seventeen days after the killing of Dr. Jose Rizal, Spanish rule in the Philippines totally collapsed. The Filipino people removed his body from an obscure burial place and reburied him as a national hero. Every year, they honour him by celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> of December as Rizal Day".

2. "After the revolution, the Filipino Legislature sought to bestow a pension on Jose Rizal's

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in the early 1950's by The Burma Translation Society, patronized by the former Nagani Author U Nu, the then Prime Minister of Burma.

mother. She declined the pension on the ground that it would lower the standard of patriotism observed in her family. The Rizals, she said, did not serve Filipinos for money”.

In the original, the authors continued the story, recounting how the Katipunan and the Filipinos revolted against the Spaniards and detailing the conflicts between the Filipino patriots and the new invaders, namely the U. S. A., who had ‘bought’ the Philippines from the Spaniards and did not recognize Filipino Independence but turned the Philippines into an American Colony. They also wrote about Dr. Rizal’s parents, his brothers and sisters and his widow Josephine.

The first chapter of the English version started with the execution of the three innocent native Catholic Priests, Fathers Mariano Gomez, Jose Burgos and Emilio Zamora. The Spanish government sentenced them together with other Cavite Rebels to death. They were garroted. The literal translation of U Ohn Khin’s version was: “These three priests were executed by squeezing the neck”<sup>1</sup>. Since garrote is not very common in Burma and as he did not explain properly, many Burmese readers could have been confused and could have believed that all of them were hanged<sup>2</sup> on the gallows at Bagumbayan<sup>3</sup> death field.

In the English version too, it was written that Father Gomez was already 85 and that he and the other two priests prayed for the henchmen while they were being taken to be liquidated. On p. 4, there was written: “He was garroted on Bagumbayan Field, fronting the sea of Manila; a place consecrated in the Filipino mind to the memories terrible and yet grand. Native poets and orators who have been there see every blade of grass springing from the blood of heroes are hardly over-imaginative”.

In the Burmese version, U Ohn Khin dramatized that story slightly more than that of the English version in accordance with Burmese taste to make it more ‘Zat.nar’<sup>4</sup>. It cannot be ruled out that he

---

<sup>1</sup> The meaning of the verb ‘garrote’ is given in the Oxford Dictionary as: “Execute a person condemned to death by strangling or throttling, a stick being twisted to tighten a cord over the wind pipe being the apparatus used”.

<sup>2</sup> Some Filipinos believe that these three priests were guillotined (beheaded). The Guillotine was invented by the French and the Philippines was under the Spanish rule. Hence, I believe these priests were really garroted, to plant fear among the natives so that they would not dare do anything against the Spanish rulers.

<sup>3</sup> It means ‘New Town’ in Tagalog, the main language of the eight provinces that started the revolution in the Philippines. Nowadays, this field is known as the Luneta Park.

<sup>4</sup> Traditionally, Burmese people like dramatic and emotional poems, songs and acts so that a drama or a play could enchant the public. There is a word called “Zat-nar” meaning to build up to a tragic climax or to touch the hearts of the audience by a faultless performance.

wanted to point out indirectly that similar things happened in Burma, too. In 1933, the British government beheaded some members of the Saya San's Peasants Revolution and showed their heads as an "exhibition" to the Burmese public, just to plant fear in the natives so that they would not dare do anything against the British rulers.

Apart from that, he wanted to pour 'gasoline on the fire' for the Burmese independence struggle against the British by writing indirectly: "The Spaniards tortured the revolutionaries as well as innocent people very cruelly, much more than "the third degree" in modern days, so that the natives would fear; however, the more the Spanish government tortured, the more the revolutions broke out. Sometimes, the Filipinos had to tolerate the torture, as in our Burmese Proverb; as long as one cannot defeat the enemy, he/she has to practice the Khamti Parami<sup>1</sup>."

Unlike the English version, U Ohn Khin started Chapter one with an introduction to the geography and history of the Philippines for the Burmese readers. He explained why the archipelago did not carry the name used in the native language but was named as 'the Philippines' just to honour the ruler of Spain. These explanations were not in the version of Russell and Rodriguez because they were not needed for Filipino and American readers. U Ohn Khin stated that the Philippines lies slightly to the southeast of Burma and that the distance between the Philippines and Burma is more than one thousand miles as the crow flies. However, the Philippines is to the northeast of Singapore and the distance is approximately two thousand miles as the crow flies. Furthermore he added: "The Philippines is not too far from Saigon, where our beloved Prince Myingun<sup>2</sup> and his two sons

---

<sup>1</sup> The Buddhist practice of patience and forbearance

<sup>2</sup> Prince Myingun was one of the elder sons of King Mindon, the founder of Mandalay City. King Mindon practiced polygamy and is supposed to have had more than 50 sons, but none of his sons was named as his heir. Instead he named his younger brother, Prince Kanaung, as the Crown Prince. This led to a palace revolution headed by Prince Myingun and his younger brother Prince Myin Khondaing. Although they could assassinate their uncle, Prince Kanaung, their revolt failed because the other elder sons of King Mindon such as Prince Thonzai and Prince Mekkkaya sided with their father. After the aborted coup they hijacked a British steamer at one of the jetties of Mandalay and escaped to Lower Burma, then a British territory. From Rangoon they went to Pondichery in India, then a French territory. After the death of his younger brother, Prince Myin Khondaing, Prince Myingun transferred to Saigon, then French Indochina. From there, he tried to invade Burma many times. During the First World War he thought he had a 'golden opportunity' and marched towards Burma. The situation, however, had at that time changed and the British and French had become allies. The French Governor General of Indo China ordered French troops to stop him and his followers at the East Bank of the Mekong River, the then border between British Burma and French Indo-China, which, since 1954, is also the border between Burma and Laos.

There were rumours that the name of the elder son of Prince Myingun was Prince Moe Gyo (meaning Thunder) and the name of the younger one was Prince Teza (meaning Glory). When the Minami Organ was established, the Japanese Colonel Suzuki wanted to have a Burmese name. Since the Japanese word Minami means Thunder in English, Aung San gave him the Burmese name Bo Moe Gyo. The Saturday-born son Aung San took the name Teza according to his zodiac. Almost all of the Thirty Comrade Members changed their 'Thakin' names to 'Bo' names in accordance with

have to live poorly”. In this way he wanted to agitate for the Burmese Independence Struggle.

Then he wrote why the isles were named ‘Philippines’. In the year 1519 A.D, a Portuguese navigator called Magellan became a subject of the Spanish king, Charles V, and on his majesty’s service he sailed westwards with five ships in search of the “Spice Isles”. They crossed the Atlantic Ocean, sailed down to the southern-most point of South America and reached the Pacific Ocean. There they sailed westwards and had to suffer due to, among other things, the dangerously high waves and the shortage of food and water. After 98 days of sailing in the Pacific Ocean, on the 16th of March 1521, they found an island. The natives of that island stole nearly everything they had. Hence, they named the island “Ladron” (Island of Robbers)<sup>1</sup> and they sailed off further to the west in search of the Spice Isles. A few days later they “discovered” an Archipelago. To honour the Spanish Crown Prince Philip, they named the Archipelago “The Philippines”.

In the English version they did not give details such as those in U Ohn Khin’s version. U Ohn Khin’s background information is much longer and includes more facts about the Philippines and its people. It appears that U Ohn Khin wanted the Burmese people to become familiar with the Philippines.

Furthermore, U Ohn Khin made an ironical comment, “Magellan and his followers might have

---

their day of birth based on astrology. For example, the Wednesday-born Thakin Hla Pe became Bo Let Ya, the Tuesday-born Thakin Aung Than became Bo Setkya, the Saturday-born Thakin Shu Maung became Bo Ne Win, the Tuesday-born Thakin Hla Maung became Bo Zeya, Sunday-born Thakin San Hlaing became Bo Aung, Thursday-born Thakin Saw Lwin became Bo Min Gaung and so on.

The creation of Bo Moe Gyo (General Thunder) and Bo Teza (General Glory) could either be a blind coincidence or cleverly made by Colonel Suzuki and Aung San, nobody knew. In any case, some Burmese welcomed the marching of BIA together with the Japanese Imperial Army inside Burma because there were rumours which eventually became one of the biggest propaganda campaigns, that the Burma Independence Army was headed by Prince Moe Gyo (or Prince Thunder), a son of the revolutionary Prince Myingun, hence, he was a grand son of King Mindon, the real heir to the Burmese throne! There was also another coincidence. When the BIA was inside Burma and recruited sufficient troops, Bo Teza changed back to his former name Aung San and he kept this name until his death. Except from him, none of the other Thirty Comrade Members changed back their names until their dying days. Why did he change back to his former name? Aung San was well known to be a very open and honest man. He was a popular student leader and the founder of BIA. Most probably, he did not want the populace to confuse him with a son of Prince Myingun but wanted to show his proper identity! It cannot be ruled out that Colonel Suzuki intentionally and wittingly took the name and persuaded Aung San to do the same, because the Japanese made similar propaganda in the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia. There was a folk tale that one day a national hero would chase out the White Rulers with the help of a Yellow Race from the East. Before the Japanese armies came to East Indies this story was broadcast daily from Tokyo Radio and pamphlets were thrown from Japanese planes. Later, the Japanese were welcomed by the natives. When the Japanese-trained Army was established in the East Indies, the former officers of the Royal Dutch East Indies Army like Nasution and Soeharto joined that army voluntarily.

<sup>1</sup> Isla delos Ladrones

forgotten or ignored what Jesus Christ taught: If you are slapped on the left cheek, please turn your right cheek to be slapped. However, the Spaniards taught the natives how to become good Christians and how to behave as good Christians, so that the natives had to turn one cheek after another whenever the Spaniards wanted to torture them. The way the Spaniards treated the Filipinos and Indians in America was comparable to the way the Roman Emperors tortured the Christians in the early centuries AD, however, the Pope at that time neither stopped nor condemned it". By showing the similarities of all colonial masters he indirectly highlighted British treatment of the Burmese.

U Ohn Khin wrote: "The natives of the Philippines welcomed Magellan and his sailors and treated them well at the beginning, however, when Magellan and his followers forced the natives at gun-point to be baptised, Magellan and some captains of the ships were liquidated by the natives".

I don't know where U Ohn Khin got this historical fact. According to Filipino history books, Magellan was killed by the Chieftain called Lapu Lapu<sup>1</sup> before he could land on the shore. Some of his followers escaped and the next mission came many years later with gun boats and made the Archipelago their colony. Here I would like to cite one Filipino version of the story of the 'Chieftain' Lapu Lapu: "He was the King of Mactan Island and was known as the first Filipino hero. When Ferdinand Magellan, a Spaniard who "discovered" the Philippines, landed in Cebu, he ordered Filipinos to honour the king of Spain. Chief Lapu-Lapu refused his demand. Magellan, along with 48 soldiers, met Lapu-Lapu in Mactan Island for a battle. During the battle, Magellan and 15 of his men were killed. For 54 years thereafter, no Spaniard set foot in the Philippine soil."<sup>2</sup>

Here too, U Ohn Khin made an ironical comment: "If Magellan had not been killed by the natives, later he might have committed suicide for regret and sorrow that he named those islands 'The Philippines' to honour Prince Phillip because when later Prince Philip became the king of Spain, his reputation was not good and he was known to be one of the notorious kings of Spain.

In the English version, on p. 17, it was written: "Spain laid claim to the entire Archipelago, more than two thousand sizable Islands. Portugal disputed this, neither having the slightest just basis for

---

<sup>1</sup> In the Philippines, there is a sea fish called Lapu Lapu, too. Hence, a famous joke evolved among the Filipinos: "Who killed Magellan? Lapu Lapu! Who killed Lapu Lapu? Who else! Fishermen"!

<sup>2</sup> Source: Mga bayani ng Lahi (Heroes of the race), emanila.com

its claim, until, the pope settled the quarrel out of hand and gave the Philippines to Spain”.

While describing how both Spain and Portugal wanted the Philippines to become their soil and how the pope had to intervene, U Ohn Khin wrote much longer with his own comments that both Spain and Portugal were grabbing undue rights like two robbers fighting for the booty. The pope too, divided the whole world as if the world were his own property, inherited from his ancestors, and as though he had the divine right to do so. U Ohn Khin wrote that the Philippines archipelago belonged to the natives of that archipelago, the Filipinos, and that apart from them, no one had any rights to the land. In this way he echoed the claims of the Burmese from The Doe Bama Asiayone (We Burmese Organization) indirectly: “Burma is our land, Burmese is our language, we, the Burmese should rule our country”.

On p. 35 he wrote: “On the administrative side, Spaniards used guns and cannons for the maintenance of their law and order and exacted obedience from the natives; from the first to the last the rulers had but the one broad policy, which was to overawe the people they ruled and subjugate them with fear. On the educational side the account was wholly different. The missionary priests established schools and taught the natives properly. However, they practiced ‘justice a la espangnole’, and most of the Mr. Justices became Mr. Injustices when there was a court case between a native and a Spaniard or if the accused was a native. It was as in our Burmese proverb, ‘carrying water with one hand and carrying torch of flame with the other hand’ so that one can set fire and distinguish it later whenever he likes’.

U Ohn Khin wanted to point out that the same thing was happening in Burma between the British rulers and their subjects. Once, a British officer was drunk and had a car accident where a native was mortally injured. Mr. Justice J. S. Furnival did his duty as a judge very fairly and sentenced that Englishman to imprisonment according to the act. As a result, Mr. Furnival was boycotted by the British community in Burma.

Furthermore, U Ohn Khin wrote: “The Spaniards discriminated the natives and those of mixed descent, and those of mixed descent discriminated the natives. Because of that, the natives hated both. However, some Filipino parents wanted to have a white Spaniard, rather than a native man as a son-in-law”.

I sincerely believe that U Ohn Khin wanted once again to refer indirectly to the situation in Burma, because during the Colonial Era, the British opened clubs, ‘only for the “whites” or Europeans’, ‘only for those of mixed descent’ and ‘only for the natives’. In transportation too, the first class wagons of the trains and the first class cabins of the steamers were reserved for the ‘whites’ alone. The pure ‘whites’ looked down upon those of mixed descent and they in turn looked down upon the natives, the people of Burma.<sup>1</sup>

It is clearly pointed out on p. 42, where U Ohn Khin wrote: “All ‘whites’, whenever they became the ruler or administrator of a place which is very far away from their homeland, and especially if the natives of that place are ‘coloured’, they automatically assumed that the natives were inferior to them in every aspect. Because of that mentality, they practiced all kinds of tyranny, injustice, segregation and cruelties there. Details could be observed all over the world: how Belgian colonial masters behaved in the Congo in Africa, how Dr. Pete conducted himself in South Africa and what Germans did in the South Seas. Generally, Europeans or ‘whites’ were terrible and very cruel, whenever they conquered and ruled a land of a ‘coloured’ people”.

With the following sentence it cannot be ruled out that U Ohn Khin wanted to compare indirectly the Friars of the Philippines to the most hated Indian Chattiars in Burma: “The Spanish Friars owned many lands and they became very powerful”. In fact, the Indian Chattiars became big landowners, too. However, the Spanish friars, aside from being landowners, were also more powerful than the Governor-General of the Philippines. Due to monastic rule, any Governor-General who did not dance to the friars’ tunes were either recalled by the Spanish throne or assassinated by the lackeys of the friars. Chattiars on the other hand could be powerful only in the law suites in the civil courts, either to take the land and properties of the people who borrowed money from them due to ‘On Demand Papers’ or to auction lands and properties of the person who was in debt. In any case, the Chattiars too were the subjects of his/her majesty. Normally they had to obey the orders of a township or district level colonial officers unless they could put that officer in their pocket by means of bribes.

---

<sup>1</sup> After Burmese Independence in 1948, many persons of mixed descent, mostly Anglo-Burmans and Anglo-Indians, either left the country or changed their names to synchronized Burmese names and stayed in Burma. For example Mr. Charles Brown became U Chit Nyo; Ms. Sandra Miller became Daw Sandar Min Hla and Victor Booth became U Aung Bu. Similarly, a Sikh, Mir Singh became U Mya Sein, a Bengali Muslim called Musa became Maung Sa and a Mogul called Kaman Lattiff became U Khin Maung Latt, and so did a Chinese Tan Ang Swee become Tin Aye Swe.

In Chapter 3, U Ohn Khin indirectly compared the abuse of power of the civil guards of the Philippines at that time and the colonial police of Burma, which was staffed to a large extent with Indians: “One day when Jose Rizal came back from his mother’s house he did not see a civil guard staying in a dark place and consequently did not salute him. Because of not saluting the guard, he was slashed by that civil guard with his sword across the back. When he reported this to the authorities, jeering indifference was all his reward”.

Here he commented ironically with humour: “The civil guard was only an ordinary human being, maybe even a native collaborator of the colonial power or a coloured person they brought from their other colonies, but neither an angel nor a *devata* whose body is shining in the darkness; hence, the poor Rizal could not take notice of him and did not salute. Of course, it was a big offence! A coloured native had to show respect to a colonial officer, either ‘coloured’ or ‘white,’ who was doing his duty and was never doing wrong. The civil guard was kind enough to slash him with the sword across the back. The guard had a right to slash with the blade and to cut Jose Rizal’s neck as a rebel. It was a big piece of luck for Jose Rizal because the civil guard was a ‘kind hearted’ civil guard!

While giving the summery of *Noli Me Tangere*, it is interesting that U Ohn Khin gave emphasis to this aspect of the novel without taking note of the character Sisa, her husband and two sons. The Filipinos refer to their country as ‘Motherland’. In which case, Sisa was supposed to represent the country and the cruel husband Spain. The two sons are the people.

There was one novel called “Doh May May” (Our Mother), written by the author Maha Swe, which was banned in Burma. A young and pretty lady called Ma Daung (Ms. Peacock) was happily married and had six young sons. One day, a bandit leader called Ko In killed her husband and raped her and made her his wife by force. In fact, Ma Daung (Ms. Peacock) represented ‘Mother Burma’ and her cruel second husband Ko In represented England. After Ko In got Ma Daung, he not only misused all of her wealth and properties but also bullied all stepsons. He did not send the children to school and made them work for him. When the children became teenagers, the five elder sons (who represented the ethnic minorities) did not like him but due to lack of education they could not do anything against him and had to tolerate his bullying. However, the youngest son

Maung Myo Nyunt (who represented the Burmans), and was presumed to be the most intelligent and educated among them, tried to revolt against the cruel step father and search for friends from the neighbourhood who might help them.

I don't know whether it was Maha Swe's own idea or whether he got an idea after reading *Noli Me Tangere*.

In Chapter 6 of U Ohn Khin's version, Jose Rizal fell in love with his second cousin, Leonora, who was the daughter of his mother's first cousin Antonio Rivera. In the original English version Russell and Rodriguez wrote that Antonio Rivera was uncle and benefactor of Jose Rizal. They did not mention whether he was Rizal's paternal or maternal uncle, nor did they mention that he was a cousin of his mother or father. Most probably U Ohn Khin took it for granted that she was his second cousin because marriages between second cousins were and are not very strange in Burma. However, marriages between first cousins, though not a taboo, were and are not common in Burma with the exception of the marriages between 'cross cousins' (children of brothers and sisters) among the Arakanese (Rakhaings), which was the tradition of Lord Buddha's ancestors Sakka Sakis Royal Families.<sup>1</sup>

The heading of Chapter 7 in the English version was "Again in the Philippines". U Ohn Khin titled his Chapter 7 "Leaving the country for the second time". However, most parts of this chapter were the translation of Chapter 7 of the English version, except U Ohn Khin added one sentence on p. 150 where Maximo Viola gave Rizal money for the publication of the book 'Noli Me Tangere' as well as for the trip. He stated it was very similar to the way Friedrich Engels helped Karl Marx, so that Karl Marx could publish his book 'Das Kapital'. This comparison was not in the English version.

As I mentioned earlier, most of the former Nagani writers were leftists which was 'a la mode' in most of the British and French colonies then, and U Ohn Khin, too, wanted to add the names of leftist leaders wherever it was possible.

On p. 153, he described how popular the book 'Noli Me Tangere' was: "Although the book was banned in the Philippines, almost all Filipinos read it secretly. Some educated Filipinos had to take

---

<sup>1</sup> See, compare and contrast Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's "Freedom from Fear". P. 64.

a role of 'Reader'. When he/she read this book many people, literate as well as illiterate, came to listen. Others stood guard to watch out for the authorities. These scouts could forewarn the readers of government surveillance when detectives were coming". Then U Ohn Khin made a very harsh comment: "In all colonies of the 'whites', the most important duty of the government surveillance and detectives is to watch the subjects of his/her majesty properly and ascertain what kind or type of books they read. For that purpose, they would put their nose everywhere to sniffle, as if a dog were putting its nose inside a pile of excrement full of lice". In this way he analyzed the colonial situation in Burma wherever it was possible.

Chapters 8 to 12 of the English version were shortened in U Ohn Khin's version to Chapters 8 to 11. Chapter 12 of the English version was titled 'El Filibusterismo'. In U Ohn Khin's version 'El Filibusterismo' was included in Chapter 11.

U Ohn Khin titled his Chapter 12 as: "Return to the Native Country to face Death". In fact, this chapter was the combination and summary of chapter 13, 'Safe Conduct', and a large part of Chapter 14, 'The Exile of Dapitan', in the English version.

U Ohn Khin named his final chapter, Chapter 13, 'The Execution'. In fact it was also the combination and summary of the last part of Chapter 14, 'The Exile of Dapitan', Chapter 15, 'The Katipunan', and Chapter 16, 'From Martyrdom unto this Peace', in the English version.

Jose Rizal was born on 19th June<sup>1</sup> 1861 at Calamba. He was killed on 30th December 1896. Hence, he was 36 years 6 months and 11 days old at his death. In U Ohn Khin's version he stated: "Dr. Rizal was 36 years old at that time and he had served his country for 24 years". This was not stated in the English version. Most probably, U Ohn Khin wanted to call on the people of Burma, then a British colony, to consider Dr. Jose Rizal as an ideal person, to follow his example of sacrificing two thirds of his own life for the liberation of his motherland from a foreign ruler.

On p. 283 in U Ohn Khin's Chapter 13,, as Dr. Rizal was taken to the Bagumbayan Field, he wrote: „Exactly 37 years and 28 days ago, a Filipino patriot called John Brown walked on the same path.

---

<sup>1</sup> Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Prize Laureate and the most famous political prisoner in Burma, was born on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1945. Hence, according to astrology, she is also in the same Zodiac as Jose Rizal. Like Dr. Jose Rizal, she too married a foreigner. Now, she has a destiny similar to his. Was it a coincidence or due to their Zodiac? Or has it happened because of their similar Kamma?

He was taken to Bagumbayan Field to be executed in the same way.”

However, in the English version, p. 305, it was written: „Thirty Seven Years and twenty eight days before, another martyr had gone forth to his death with the same clear-souled, untroubled calm. ‚This is a beautiful country,‘ said John Brown, Osawatomie Brown, as with the sheriff he drove to the execution place; ‘I never noticed it before.’”

On p. X of the Prefatory Note of the English version, the authors of the book wrote: „The hope to make available to American readers the story of the great man and national hero of the people of the United States has undertaken to lead to national independence“. Besides, a sheriff can be found only in the United States but not in the Philippines. Apart from that, the name Osawatomie Brown sounds more African American rather than a Filipino. It can, therefore, be concluded that the reference to John Brown was the authors’ way of showing their readers that Rizal’s calm acceptance of his execution is comparable to that of the other man familiar to them.

It appears that U Ohn Khin failed to understand this point and thought that John Brown was a Filipino.

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, when Dr. Jose Rizal was killed by the firing squad, U Ohn Khin ended the last chapter with the addition of two more paragraphs, stating that the Spanish rule in the Philippines totally collapsed one year, eight months and seventeen days after the killing of Dr. Jose Rizal. He went on to describe his reburial, the annual ceremony to honor him, and the attempt of the Filipino Legislature to bestow a pension on his mother, a pension which she declined, saying the family did not serve the country for money.

In contrast, the English version, as detailed above, had 17 chapters and five appendices including much information which U Ohn Khin may have thought irrelevant for Burmese readers.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the main points emerging on the basis of this comparison between the English and Burmese versions:

1. The English version of Russell & Rodriguez had 17 chapters and five appendices; however, U Ohn Khin’s Burmese version had only 13 chapters.

2. No doubt, the Burmese version is “Jose Rizal’s Biography” freely translated by U Ohn Khin, who repeatedly added his own ideas and comments. In contrast to that, he omitted some parts of the original version.
  
3. I would, therefore like to name the Burmese version “Jose Rizal’s Biography by Charles Edward Russell and E. B. Rodriguez, Retold by U Ohn Khin with his own ideas, comments and suggestions to the Burmese people“.
  
4. Although U Ohn Khin stated that he ‘translated’ the book ‘The Hero of the Philippines’, he in fact used it wherever possible, but most particularly in the first chapter, as a guide in analyzing the colonial situation in Burma.

### III. APPENDICES

#### Appendix 1

#### **SHORT INFORMATION on the MAKING of the BOOK REPORTS**

CHOSEN BOOKS from the bibliography will be provided on a lending basis by the manager [or for people in Myanmar through the Myanmar Book Centre in Yangon (55 Baho Road; telephone 221-271, 212-409)].

TWO REPORTS on each book by different persons are accepted.

LENGHT: 8,000 to 12,000 words (plus special space, if desired);

LANGUAGE of PUBLICATION: English; manuscripts in Myanmar language will be translated;

CRITERIA (must not slavishly be observed):

1. Biographical information about the author/translator, and other contributors;
2. Information about the non-Myanmar sources used in the book; (if the book is a translation, the original English version will be provided, too, if possible;)
3. Summary of the book's contents;
4. Information about the special aim and intended impact of the book at the time of publication;
5. How are foreign terms and concepts translated or transformed into the Myanmar language and the Myanmar context? (May be omitted!)
6. Personal assessment by the reviewer of the book, its impact on later times and its meaning for today

DEADLINE of DELIVERY of the REPORT: December 31, 2005 (the deadline can be extended);

DELIVERY of the REPORTS DRAFTED: Directly to the manager of the project by email or through the Myanmar Book Centre.

COMMENTS and EDITING: The reports will be commented upon by another person. The reviewer may react on the comments and answer the questions as he or she likes. The responsibility for the final editing of the reports is with the project manager.

REWARD: As a financial reward, each reviewer will receive 50 US \$ at the time of submitting the book report and 30 US \$ after the final editing.

OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS like recollections of elder people, who remember the impact of Nagani on their life, and essays on subjects related to the club (Nagani Song, Nagani Magazine, the role of literature in disseminating knowledge in Myanmar, etc.) are very much appreciated.

Appendix 2

**INFORMATION about COMMENTARIES on BOOK REPORTS**

**1.** The commentaries asked for shall serve two aims

First (and most important): To start a dialogue on Myanmar's intellectual and literary heritage between interested people inside and outside of Myanmar.

Second (and important, too): To check the clarity of the report with regard to the intended publication.

Therefore, the commentator should be interested in Burma affairs and in the general topic of the respective book, but must not know anything about its specific content.

**2.** Length of each commentary: Must not exceed the space of this paper.

**3.** Some hints that may be useful to observe in writing a commentary:

Are there any questions that are brought up by reading the report?

If yes, what kind of questions do arise?

Are the criteria listed in the “Short information on the making of book reports” (see attachment) met by the book report?

What information on the book report do I find interesting/exciting or unnecessary/redundant?

Is there anything that I would recommend to the author of the report?

Delivery of the commentary: It would be appreciated if the commentaries could be sent by email to the above mentioned email address. If the author of the report chooses to react on the commentary, the commentator will be informed.

Affairs to come: All participants will be informed about the development of the publishing process of the reports and are invited to participate in future deliberations and activities. - Questions and recommendations are very much appreciated!

Mogyo, *Jose Rizal*

## MYANMAR LITERATURE PROJECT



starting with an investigation into the NAGANI BOOK CLUB

The project's  
**Working Papers**  
are published by  
the **Department for Southeast Asian Studies of Passau University**

Already Published:

10:1, An Introduction into the Nagani Book Club

10:2, Thein Pe, *Saya Lun* and *Member of Parliament*

10:3, Ba Hein, *The World of Capitalists*

10:4, Thein Pe, *Students' Boycotter*

10:5, Ba Khaing, *Political History of Burma*

10:6, Nu, *Gandalarit*

10:100, Papers Presented at the Burma Studies Conference, Singapore 2006

-----

Some Nagani Books  
were scanned and are available on CD.

For details contact  
habezett@t-online.de

-----

All Working Papers published until now are available  
at

<http://www.zoellner-online.org/mlp.htm>

and at the Online Burma Library

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=2083>

## INVITATION

Readers are invited to participate in the project by

- writing **comments and criticisms** on the contents of this and other volumes of this series;
- contributing **essays** on Burmese/Myanmar literature as a medium between the international world and Burmese society;
- providing **material** that sheds more light on the Nagani Book Club, its context and impact on Burmese intellectual and literary life;
- offering **assistance** as translators and commentators of book reports.

-----  
For contributions and questions, please contact:

Dr. Hans-Bernd Zöllner  
University of Hamburg and Passau  
Tel: 0049-40-8317961  
Fax: 0049-40-84051735  
Mail: habezett@t-online.de