

People – young or old, rich or poor, famous or little known – love their own life. This is the reason why they put up a terrific struggle to stay alive when coming face to face with life-threatening challenges. However, Kyaw Zaw Oo, a Rakhine youth born and brought up in the countryside, appears to choose death over life when he finds himself torn between love and duty. Until love for a white girl creeps into his heart, he has been living a relatively contented life. Later, he earns the wrath of his own folks protecting his beloved white girl, Ellie, and her family from the danger of the local ethnic insurgent group. For any young men, the day when their love is reciprocated by the girls they love would be the day they find themselves in the seventh heaven of rapture. Ironically enough, circumstances force Kyaw Zaw Oo to join the rebel group in the deep jungle just moments after he wins the heart of the white girl, whom he loves so dearly. Despite seemingly inexhaustible love between Kyaw Zaw Oo and Ellie, the gulf separating the two lovers is too broad for them to cross over. While Kyaw Zaw Oo fights along with his own folks to drive the British family away from their land, Ellie actively involves herself in quelling the rebel group, in which Kyaw Zaw Oo is a member. What happens afterward will lead readers to interpret Kyaw Zaw Oo's personality from various angles. Pho Kyawt's *Mye Si Mel Mel Thway Yel Yel* (literally '**Blood on the Black Soil**') will not only let you catch a glimpse of the fierce struggles put up against the invading foreign capitalists by the local Rakhine people in the then British-ruled Burma but also give you food for thought: whether Kyaw Zaw Oo is a true freedom fighter or a mere sentimentalist.

I Gave My Life for Thee

San Shwe Baw (Sittwe)

*An English version of Phoe Kyawat's Novel
'Mye Si Mel Mel Thway Yel Yel'*

