ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Funds from the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Northern Illinois University, part of a grant made to them by the Henry Luce Foundation, allowed me to take time away from my normal duties in order to make a start on writing new courses for beginners in Burmese. During this time the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London kindly allowed me to continue to use its equipment and facilities (room, computers, printers, xeroxing, recording, photography, telephone, mail, fax, stationery and the like). A visit to Burma was funded by money from both the Center and SOAS, and supplemented by a grant from the British Academy. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Michael Aung-Thwin, the director of the Center, who successfully applied for the grant, and chose me to write the book; and to Dr. Haig D. Roop, coauthor of Beginning Burmese, the standard textbook for 25 years, for his encouragement.

I would also like to acknowledge the part played by my colleague at SOAS, Mrs. Anna Allott, who heroically shouldered a heavy load of teaching and other duties for part of the time I had arranged to be away; and the contribution of my wife Sue, who generously and without complaint took on more than her share of the care of the house and family so that I could make progress with writing.

I received valuable comments on parts of the draft from U Saw Tun, of Northern Illinois University, and from Daw Khin Mya Swe and Daw San San Me in London. The recordings were made at SOAS under the supervision of the Technician Jahan Latif, and the speakers were —
I am grateful to them all for their willing cooperation and perseverance: the second and third hours in a stuffy recording studio with pernickety microphones demand a high degree of concentration and discipline.

Prototype versions of the course were used by the beginners’ classes at SOAS in the four years from 1990/91 to 1993/4, and at the SEASSIs held at Cornell University in 1990 and at the University of Washington in 1992. Members of all these classes made many helpful comments, as well as finding numerous typing errors, and I would like to thank them for being so tolerant and constructive.

My greatest debt is to many friends in and from Burma, who not only answered my questions about their language and customs with immense patience and goodwill, but also made me welcome in their homes and daily lives, and went to staggering lengths to ensure that my needs were met in generous measure. To them all I extend my heartfelt thanks.

The photograph used for the cover is of a carved wooden doorway in the Shwe Inbin Monastery in Mandalay. It was taken by Dr. Elizabeth Moore of SOAS, and the design of the cover was implemented by Alfred Birnbaum, who was attending my class at the time. The photographs used in the text were taken on my visit to Burma in 1991. The remaining illustrations are from books, magazines and other material published in Burma.

I am responsible for typesetting the text, which includes three home-made fonts, and for editing the tapes. Professionals would have been more skilled but also more costly, so readers are asked to be indulgent when my lack of expertise shows through.