The search for 'home' : Anglo-Burman identity at the end of empire

Katrina Chludzinski

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ABSTRACT

THE SEARCH FOR ‘HOME’: ANGLO-BURMAN IDENTITY AT THE END OF EMPIRE

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The study of mixed race populations and their identity formation have become important fields of historical research over the past few decades within the larger scope of colonialism. This dissertation explores how Anglo-Burmans formed and redefined their own place in the twentieth century as a consequence of conflicting perspectives on race and ‘belonging’ in the British Empire on the one hand, and majority Burman policies in the post-independence era on the other. These views are largely derived from archival records in the United Kingdom and Myanmar. Minutes from meetings as well as correspondence with Anglo-Burmans, British officials, and Burmese officials illustrated the complex situation the Anglo-Burman community found themselves in. Memoirs from Anglo-Burmans as well as contemporaneous print media help augment these perspectives.

In this dissertation I show that Anglo-Burmans had different perspectives on their futures across temporal periods and often disagreed about how they should position themselves to best survive. The growth of the population in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries shaped how Anglo-Burmans understood their place and the degree to which they belonged in Burma. Complex British reactions to miscegenation between British men and Burmese women and the mixed-race offspring that arose from these relations left Britons in fear of their own futures in the colony. Given their connections to the colonial regime and consequent economic advantages, Anglo-Burmans thought of themselves as being superior to the Burmese population. The
Government of India Act 1935, the growth of Burmese nationalism, and the outbreak of World War II forced Anglo-Burmans to reevaluate their place and future within Burma. As the British moved towards more self-government, this mixed-race group feared they would be forgotten by the British, a shift that challenged their sense of self belonging.

In 1944, a conference was held in Simla, India, with the evacuated Burmese Government, to determine how best Anglo-Burmans should move forward in order to protect themselves. Here, a small group of representatives determined it would best for the community to drop their claims to special privileges under the British and align themselves with their Burmese kin. What was meant to be a major turning point, however, turned out to illustrate the complexity of the Anglo-Burman population’s position in Burma. They could not be either British or Burmese, they were a mix, and being asked to choose was disquieting.

After Burmese independence, Anglo-Burmans continued to struggle to find their place. Many of the concerns they expressed about their future at the Simla conference came to fruition and they tried to move to the United Kingdom or another country within the British Commonwealth. But in asking for help, many used different methods to appeal to the British for assistance. Officials discussing applications for assistance were unsure of how to classify this mixed-race population. Again, they were not British or Burmese, and officials were unsure where to place them.

Between 1900 and 1962, there were many political and social changes in Burma. These years saw constant turmoil from British colonization, self-government without independence, two World Wars, and decolonization. In short, things in Burma were constantly changing across the twentieth century and various British, Anglo-Burman, and Burmese populations had to adapt accordingly. This study seeks to understand how Anglo-Burmans, a small and understudied group, negotiated their community identity through this period. While many scholars assume that
this community identified as more European than Asian, my research suggests this mixed-raced population struggled with their sense of belonging rather than conceiving of themselves as one or the other. How did Anglo-Burmans express their own place in society and what motivations did they have in doing so? I believe that fear and the desire for security played an important role in their constructions. What affiliations would afford them the greatest sense of security in the colony? What group, Burmese or European, would be the most accepting of them? Which identity could afford them the best opportunities for personal advancement? In answering these questions, I seek to make better sense of how Anglo-Burmans have understood their place, ethnicity, and nationality over time.
THE SEARCH FOR ‘HOME’: ANGLO-BURMA IDENTITY AT THE END OF EMPIRE

BY

KATRINA CHLUDZINSKI
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INTRODUCTION

In 1947, an Anglo-Burman woman named Ethel Buchanan wrote to Sir Waldron Smithers, Member of Parliament for Orpington, Kent, pleading for help. “Things are going from bad to worse for us—(Anglo-Burmans)—nothing can be done, and nothing will be done till the British public is told the naked truth.”¹ The ‘naked truth’ to which she referred in her letter was her view that the newly independent Burmese government was not only discriminating against the Anglo-Burman community, but also putting their lives in danger. Buchanan believed that Anglo-Burmans and the Burmese were two very different populations; moreover, the British were the only ones who could help her and those like her. Ironically, her assertions came only three years after a conference where a small group of Anglo-Burmans proclaimed that they would no longer emphasize the British aspects of their identities, as they had done for the last fifty years. What had happened in those three years to create such seemingly conflicting understandings of Anglo-Burman sense of belonging? More importantly, why did Anglo-Burmans believe that they were in danger from Burmans, and why were they seeking succor from the British when Burmese independence had just been won?

This dissertation answers these questions by exploring how Anglo-Burmans formed and redefined themselves in the twentieth century as a consequence of complicated perspectives on race and belonging. The study of mixed-race populations and their identity formation within

colonial and post-colonial settings have become important fields of historical research over the past few decades. This project’s examination of how Anglo-Burmans moved between British and Burmese worlds throughout the twentieth century fits within this dynamic and expanding scholarly literature. The identities of former colonial subjects continue to have resonance for generations, as we have seen most recently in the controversy over the “rights” of the Windrush generation who relocated to Great Britain following World War II. Many British citizens from Caribbean countries who had lived their entire lives in the United Kingdom faced deportation in 2017 when they could not produce naturalization papers. Never having traveled abroad after arriving in the UK, they had no passports; and they had fallen through the cracks in revisions to government policies that would have furnished them with certificates attesting that they were legally permitted to live in the United Kingdom. When countries redefine their notions of belonging, it left minority populations scrambling to explain where they belonged.

Anglo-Burmans were a byproduct of European colonization. Although European merchants had been in Burma as early as the sixteenth century, British colonization in the nineteenth century exponentially increased the country’s European presence. In 1891 there were about 7,000 Eurasians in Burma; by 1941 that number had grown to 22,000. Over time, in colonial Burma, Anglo-Burmans formed an elite class sandwiched between ethnic Asians and

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Europeans. Those who chose to identify as Anglo-Burman\(^6\) helped maintain British authority in the colony, mainly by working in industry, transport, trade, public administrations, or in the ‘professions’.\(^7\) The 1949 census shows that 40% of the population worked as “Managerial, administrative, clerical and related workers,”\(^8\) frequently working with the civil services or British-run businesses. Additionally, 22.5% of Anglo-Burman occupations were “Professional, technical, and related,”\(^9\) 14% were “Workers in operating transport occupations,”\(^10\) and 6% were “Craftsmen, production process workers, and laborers not elsewhere classified.”\(^11\) Finally, 16.5% of the population were unemployed.\(^12\) Because the Anglo-Burman population remained relatively small, however, the ethnic designation included not only people of British and Burmese heritage, but also any person of mixed-race descent who had a European paternal male relative and an Asian mother and resided in Burma. Due to British notions of race and class—as will be discussed in Chapter 1—“Anglo-Burmans” often included domiciled Europeans, or

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\(^6\) Not all those that technically could have been considered Anglo-Burman identified as such on the census. Most of these would be those whose European ancestors were among the first to live in Burma in the 17\(^{th}\) and 18\(^{th}\) centuries. However, in order to be officially classified as Anglo-Burman one needed to present proof that their father, paternal grandfather, paternal great grandfather, and so forth was European.

\(^7\) Bertie Reginald Pearn, M.A. F.R.H.S, “The Mixed Races of Burma,” 1946, IOR, Burma Office Records 1932-1948, M/4/1410, British Library, London, United Kingdom. These were the official categories used by the administration at that time.

\(^8\) Administration including customs, police and excise personnel, businessmen, employers, owners, merchants, persons supervising office work, clerks, stenographers, typists, salesgirls, and salesmen.

\(^9\) Higher grade civil, mechanical, and electrical engineers, architects, chemists, surveyors, draughtsmen, wireless operators, university teachers, school teachers, priests, religious workers, doctors, nurses, medical service works, social welfare workers, authors, journalist, editors, artists, painters, accountants, cashiers, sports instructors, laundry, and fire brigade workers.

\(^10\) Motor service workers (including mechanics and motor engineers), workers in sea, river and air transport, railway workers (including locomotive engineers, foremen, drivers).

\(^11\) Craftsmen, wood workers, laborers, army, navy and service personnel, and others without occupation, whose occupation, whose occupation cannot be classified, or is unknown.

\(^12\) Koop, 48.
people of entirely European heritage but who had lived their whole lives in Burma. Because Burma was incorporated into British India, Anglo-Burmans were classified as Half-castes or Eurasians until 1901. After this, the term Anglo-Indian began to be used because Anglo-Indians in India rallied for the change. They felt the term half caste was derogatory and Eurasians could be confused with people from Eurasia. Then, in 1935, the bill to separate Burma from India created the designation “Anglo-Burman” for official use. While there may have been populations of mixed European and Asian people who did not identify as Anglo-Burman, this study focuses on those who explicitly chose to use this identifying marker. Although the term Anglo-Burman was most commonly used, because this population was also referenced as Eurasian, Anglo-Indian, British Burman, or sometimes even “the Community,” this dissertation will utilize all these terms.

In this dissertation I show that Anglo-Burmans had different perspectives on their futures at different times and often disagreed about how they should position themselves to best survive. The growth of the population in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries shaped how Anglo-Burmans understood their place and where they belonged in Burma. Complex British reactions to miscegenation between British men and Burmese women and the mixed-race offspring that arose from these relations left Britons in fear of their own futures in the colony. With their connections to the colonial regime and consequent economic advantages, Anglo-Burmans thought of themselves as being above the Burmese population. The Government of India Act 1935, the growth of Burmese nationalism, and the outbreak of World War II forced Anglo-Burmans to reevaluate their place and future within Burma. As the British moved towards


14 In order to avoid repetition.
more self-government, this mixed-race group feared they would be forgotten by the British, a shift that challenged their sense of self belonging. In 1944, a conference was held in Simla, India, with the evacuated Burmese Government, to determine how best Anglo-Burmans should move forward in order to protect themselves. Here, a small group of representatives determined it would best for the community to drop their claims to special privileges under the British and align themselves with their Burmese kin. What was meant to be a major turning point, however, turned out to illustrate the complexity of the Anglo-Burman population’s position in Burma. They could not be either British or Burmese, they were a mix, and being asked to pick one caused anxiety among them. After Burmese independence, Anglo-Burmans continued to struggle to find their place. Many of the concerns they expressed about their future at the Simla conference came to fruition and they tried to move to the United Kingdom or another country within the British Commonwealth. But in asking for help, many used different methods to appeal to the British for assistance. Officials discussing applications for assistance were unsure of how to classify this mixed-race population. Again, they were not British or Burmese, and officials were unsure where to place them.

Between 1900 and 1962, there were many political and social changes in Burma. These years saw constant turmoil from British colonization, self-government without independence, two World Wars, and decolonization. In short, things in Burma were constantly changing across the twentieth century and various British, Anglo-Burman, and Burmese populations had to adapt accordingly. This study seeks to understand how Anglo-Burmans, a small and understudied group, negotiated their community identity through this period. While many scholars assume that this community identified as more European than Asian, my research suggests this mixed-raced population struggled with their sense of belonging rather than conceiving of themselves as one or the other. How did Anglo-Burmans express their own place in society and what motivations did
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**Historiographical Context**

Anglo-Burmans have been largely omitted from contemporary Burmese historiography. Studies dedicated to them are limited. Although many historians have studied mixed race populations throughout colonial Asia, very little has been done on Anglo-Burmans specifically. Most are non-academic overviews of the community—such as Dean Burnett’s *A History of the Anglo-Burmese Community* or John Clement Koop’s *The Eurasian Population in Burma*. Penny Edwards is the only scholar who has carried out critical examinations of the Anglo-Burmeses.¹⁵ For instance, her study of gender and Eurasians in Southeast Asia and Australia revealed how race and gender played into British constructions of half-caste children. Girls that were born from such unions were believed to inherit the negative racial attributes of their mothers while boys inherited the superior white genes of their fathers.¹⁶ She also stressed that colonial policy regarding mixed-raced children was not about making them white, as “this was deemed impossible,” but on separating these children from the negative influences of their mothers.

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¹⁶ Edwards, “Mixed Metaphors,” 42.
Therefore, the intention was to remove Eurasian girls from indigenous homes, place them in European style schools, and teach them ‘proper’ European femininity to prevent them from slipping into sexual promiscuity.\textsuperscript{17} The British Burman community felt above the Burmese, but beneath the British. Her more extensive examination of Anglo-Burmans, education, and performance also revealed the importance of educating mixed-raced children in European style schools. She argued that in “isolating Eurasians from the Burmese milieu, and creating a separate institutional layer to mark them off from Europeans [through schooling], these structures translated the legal and semantic notion of a separate Eurasian identity into a concrete community.”\textsuperscript{18} These schools and policies for Anglo-Burmans created “a space outside/below Europeans and outside/above Burmese society.”\textsuperscript{19} While Edwards’ works are important, her research mainly focused on European constructions of Anglo-Burmans. My examination expounds on this by discussing how such education was central to Anglo-Burman understandings of themselves. This reinforced their sense of abandonment, when, after independence, some Britons felt they should remain in Burma rather than live within the British commonwealth. They had been raised to believe that, while below the British, they still shared important cultural attributes with their colonial progenitors.

This project also contributes to the literature on miscegenation and Eurasian populations as well as the study of decolonization and its consequences. Recent studies have emphasized the fluidity of racial, gender, and national identities. Within Southeast Asian Studies, the most influential work on mixed-race populations has been Jean Gelman Taylor’s \textit{The Social World of}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{17} “Mixed Metaphors,” 54-58.
\textsuperscript{18} “Half-Cast,” 287.
\textsuperscript{19} “Half-Cast,” 293.
\end{flushleft}
Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia. Rather than merely looking at European or Asian populations in the Dutch East Indies separately, her scholarship was one of the first major works to argue that the interactions between these two populations created a new social categories.\(^{20}\) Her work traced the evolution of Eurasian statuses over the course of Dutch colonization. She illustrated the ways European governing institutions intervened in intimate affairs based on their needs or concerns. During the early stages of government, Taylor addressed the ways colonial governments allowed for more complex notions of family, including interracial and even temporary marriages. In order to increase the “European” population in Batavia, the Dutch included Eurasians in this population and even encouraged fathers to claim their mixed-raced offspring as legitimate children.\(^{21}\) However, over time, as more Europeans came to the Dutch East Indies, many began stressing the need to delineate clear definitions between pure Europeans and mixed-race Europeans. Educated Eurasians were limited to lower level employment positions. They were also paid very little.\(^{22}\)

Influenced by Taylor’s examinations, Ann Laura Stoler’s seminal work on mixed-race sexual relations had an even more dramatic impact on the studies that followed. While the central argument of *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* claimed that intimate sexual relationships between European men and Asian women informed colonial policies, her discussions of Eurasians in Southeast Asia has greatly influenced contemporary scholarship.\(^{23}\) In her work, Stoler demonstrated how colonial officials and other

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\(^{21}\) Taylor, 95.

\(^{22}\) Taylor, 118.

\(^{23}\) Stoler, 7.
Europeans in the colonies influenced notions of race and gender—which she also claimed were intimately linked—by educating children to behave in specific manners. She famously argued that Eurasian children, according to colonial authorities, should be taught their “place and their race.” They needed to make sure these mixed-raced populations did not upset the racial hierarchy that kept Europeans in power. Education in a shared language also played an important role. Connecting them through this common language was a way to ensure loyalty. Mixed race children that did not share the same language as their European fathers were nothing more than Asians and should not be given the same privileges as Europeans. Much like Taylor, this work also demonstrated that interactions between Europeans and Asians created a unique culture. However, by focusing on colonial reactions to these encounters, Stoler revealed the ways European notions of race and status were simultaneously structured and fluid. Eurasians struggled under colonialism to find their place. They were neither European nor Asian, and it left them feeling insecure. Her examination of Eurasians also exposed how “European” identities were constructed and mixed-race populations marked a clear contradiction to definitions of what it meant to be European. My work expands on these arguments by demonstrating how British efforts to place Anglo-Burmans beneath them, while simultaneously linking them together through religion and English language education, left Anglo-Burmans struggling to find their place towards the end of colonialism and after independence. My work also illustrates how Anglo-Burmans used their shared language to justify British assistance to emigrate from Burma. This language that Stoler proved was important to European colonizers, became a tool to mixed-race people during decolonization,

24 Stoler, 81-84.

25 Stoler, 106-110.
Several other scholars have advanced the study of mixed European and Asian populations. For instance, Christina Firpo’s study of Eurasian children in French Indochina revealed that colonial authorities established programs to place “abandoned” Eurasian children in government homes. However, the French defined “abandoned” as any child who was not legally acknowledged by his or her father. Because there were large quite a few European men that had not recognized their mixed-race children, the authorities frequently abducted them from their Asian mothers. Much as Stoler argued, Firpo showed that colonial authorities wanted to make sure métis children were taught their place.26 Other recent work has stressed the significance colonial authorities placed on educating Eurasian children. In his study of Eurasians in colonial New Zealand, Damon Salesa claimed that even though the state recognized that European fathers were raising some half-caste children, it did not mean they were receiving a proper education. Since some European men were living “as natives,” colonial officials feared their children would be raised in “Heathen ignorance and superstition.” Therefore, many officials wanted to enact policies that would mandate state-run education for all Eurasian children, not simply abandoned children.27 Firpo’s study of Eurasians in colonial Indochina also revealed the significance of education to colonial officials. She argued that children that were considered ‘abandoned’ were removed from their mother’s homes and placed into Eurasian orphanages, where they were “educated to fulfill specific social functions in white colonial society.”28 My research has also indicated that education played a crucial role in Anglo-Burman identities; however, while I will


discuss European perspectives of Anglo-Burman education, I will also analyze how Eurasians incorporated their education into their sense of self, thereby giving scholars a better understanding of how hybrid populations understand their place in society. Their shared education and language played an important role in where Anglo-Burmans felt they belonged. While they struggle to find their place in independent Burma, their education was one of the things they were afraid to lose.

Many of the major works concerning Eurasians focus upon colonial policies and European constructions of race. More important to this study is how Eurasians understood their own identities. Allison Blunt’s study of nationalism and ethnicity among Anglo-Indians in the twentieth century was one of the earliest examinations to focus on Eurasian’s constructions of their own identities. Overall, her work claimed that Anglo-Indian male nationalist leaders’ identities changed over the first half of the twentieth century due to the changing relationship between Britain and India. While in the early part of the century members of this community stressed the importance of their connection to Britain because their fathers were British, as Indian independence loomed nearer, they felt it important to demonstrate to the new Indian government that the Anglo-Indian community was deeply connected to India, more so than they were to Britain. While they were making such claims, however, many Anglo-Indian women maintained their households in the ‘European style,’ complicating the simplistic definitions nationalist leaders were trying to create.29 Much like Stoler’s work, Blunt addressed the significance of gender in constructions of race and identity. More significantly, Blunt considered the ways ethnic, national, and gendered identities were constructed and performed, as well as how there were multiple understandings of Anglo-Indian identity. Lastly, I use her approach to

consider how gender constructions played a role in the construction of Anglo-Burmese identity. It is clear that notions of British masculinity were critical to Anglo-Burman ethnic and national identities; however, I will also be considering how these notions of masculinity changed as the Anglo-Burman associations began to claim more allegiance to their Burmese heritage.

Beyond these seminal and influential works, Coralie Younger, C.J. Hawes, and Vicky Lee’s research offers insights into not only how the colonizers viewed their mixed-race progeny, but how Eurasians pictured themselves.\(^{30}\) Younger used interviews with Anglo-Indians in 1982, as well as mid-20th century novels concerning Eurasians, to produce an examination of how mixed-raced people viewed themselves in relation to British interpretations of them before and after independence.\(^{31}\) While my work also considers Anglo-Burman self-perception during colonization and after, my examination will also stress the significance of decolonization in disrupting Anglo-Burmans place in society. Hawes’ work, although focusing on an era well before the one encompassed by my research, also provides important longer historical context that helps me chart ways that the Eurasian community developed. As Burma was a province of British India from 1886 until 1937, Anglo-Burmans were members of Anglo-Indian Associations. Hawes’ work on Eurasians in British India will help inform how Anglo-Burmans viewed themselves prior to the establishment of their own Anglo-Burman community. Hawes argued that external pressures “rather than internal desires” prompted the development of a Eurasian identity. Anglo-Indians believed they belonged to the British community until several acts from the British East India Company in the nineteenth century generated increased Anglo-


\(^{31}\) Younger, 30-39.
Indian alienation from European identity. By 1860, the first Anglo-Indian Association was established, a step that would influence Anglo-Burmans a few decades later.\(^{32}\) Finally, Vicky Lee’s work on Eurasian memoirs illustrates that, although the memoirs were published years after the events the authors described, they can offer valuable insights as to how people of mixed-raced heritage negotiated their own understandings of their identity.

While studies of colonial miscegenation as well as Eurasian history are crucial for this study, the broader literature on decolonization has also been critical to this project. Beyond adding to studies of race and gender during European colonization, my work will also contribute to more recent examinations that investigate the various consequences of decolonization. In particular, I address how the process of decolonization challenged notions of British and Burmese ethnicity and nationalism. I have found many of the major works concerning decolonization stressed its causes more so than its consequences.\(^{33}\) By contrast, scholars like Anne Spry Rush have put forward interesting arguments concerning the effects that the dissolution of colonialism had on local identities. Rush claimed that middle-class West Indians of non-European descent “identified themselves as imperial Britons.” Rush also argued that West Indians used their understandings of Britishness to carve a place for themselves in the colonized Caribbean. However, in the 1960s, they had to renegotiate these identities due to the challenges presented by colonialism. She claimed that during this period West Indians struggled to reevaluate their cultural identity. Much as Anglo-Burmans did during decolonization, West

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\(^{32}\) Hawes, 157.

Indians were more than just Caribbean. Many also saw themselves as partially British. Rush revealed the complicated negotiations of constructing identities during drastic global shifts. While the West Indians in the mid-twentieth century understood they needed to fashion a sense of self that linked them more with the Caribbean than with Britain, their lives for so long had been linked to Britishness, it made the task daunting. My work expands this field of inquiry as I will be examining how decolonization forced Anglo-Burmans to negotiate their own sense of belonging. Much like the West Indians, this community claimed their own version of Britishness, and when independence came, they felt the need to refashion how they defined themselves. However, this negotiation of belonging occurred over a decade before the West Indians and involved people with partial British heritage.

Immigration to Britain was also crucial to the outcome of these Anglo-Burman stories. Both decolonization and postwar economic change spurred increased emigration to the United Kingdom. For instance, in 1948, the SS Empire Windrush docked in the London, “returning” almost 500 ex-servicemen to the “Motherland.” Many of the passengers were Jamaican and had never lived in the United Kingdom before. The government moved to make Jamaicans feel at home and encouraged more to come over. These people were a part of the British empire and deserved to be treated as British. However, this sense of inclusiveness was short lived. With

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34 Anne Spry Rush, Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonization (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1. Urvashi Butalia’s “Legacies of Departure: Decolonization, Nation-making, and Gender,” in Gender and Empire, ed. Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) also falls into this historiography of decolonization and identity construction. Frederick Cooper’s “The Dialectics of Decolonization: Nationalism and Labor Movements in Postwar French Africa,” in Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World, eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press), complicates the binary historiographies of decolonization. While he is looking at nationalist and labor movements, he illustrates how they differed, some collaborating with the colonizers and others challenging them, depending on what worked best for them. My own work will contribute to this scholarship by looking at the ways Anglo-Burmans disagreed on their identity negotiations depending on what they thought would provide them with the greatest security and safety in the future.

35 Rush, 168.
austerity and economic dislocation on the rise, The British public became concerned that allowing immigrants to come into the country would overcrowd the population and create greater competition for employment and housing. Jamaicans soon encountered signs stating “No Coloured” when trying to find housing or employment. They were also physically assaulted because of their color, and the police were often time indifferent. By 1958, this fear of Jamaican immigrants led to race riots in Nottingham.36 These tensions over color and immigration influenced policies regarding the Anglo-Burmans trying to immigrate in the 1950s and 60s. But it was not just Windrush, the largest group of immigrants to Britain in the 1940s and 50s were from India and Pakistan, as well as Africa and China, and many in Britain feared what this growth would mean for their own futures.37 Hardening racial attitudes among some Britons in the 1950s shaped both British policy toward Anglo-Burmans as well as Anglo-Burman perceptions of their relationship with the United Kingdom.

Sources

My sources are drawn from the British colonial period (1824-1947) and post-independence era (1948 – 1962) in archives in the United Kingdom and Myanmar. The India Office Records, housed at the British Library in London, and materials from the National Archives in Yangon yielded an abundance of sources in the form of correspondence among government officials and members of the Anglo-Burman community, governmental documents, newspaper clippings, scholarly books and articles, as well as minutes from Anglo-Indian/Burman association meetings.


37 Panikos Panayi, Immigration History of Britain: Multicultural Racism since 1800 (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2010), 43.
and official Association documents. These not only reveal British perceptions of Anglo-Burmans, but also include many minutes of meetings and other documents from Anglo-Burman associations, thereby giving a voice to this community. While the minutes from these meetings have been mentioned in passing in some articles, they have yet to be thoroughly scrutinized. I also utilized sources from the Colonial Affairs and Colonies collection at the British National Archives for discussions of Anglo-Burmans applications regarding assistance and the Myanmar Central University Library in Yangon for Burmese language newspapers.38

I encountered obstacles in obtaining primary sources. While the archivists and librarians at the National Archives in Yangon were very helpful, I discovered that “Anglo-Burman” seems to no longer be a familiar ethnic category in Myanmar39 Furthermore, while Myanmar continues to profess willingness to “open up”, particularly to tourism and capacity-building in the higher education sectors, and restrictions are being constantly removed, nonetheless documents from 1962 to present are still classified and cannot be perused. Additionally, English-speaking researchers requesting Burmese language documents are still viewed with suspicion. In fact, many government employees are uncertain about what documents such scholars are permitted to access, which tends to prolong and complicate the research process.

I was unable to access one potentially important resource, namely the Anglo-Burmese Library, housed in Britain. This online database asserts that its mission is “the collection, indexing and preservation of records and histories of families in colonial-era Burma, and the

38 I regret that, due to time constraints, I was unable to utilize Burmese language sources. I scanned Burmese language newspapers and books, looking for discussions of Anglo-Burmans, but I was unable to find any. It was time consuming, and after not being able to find any source relating to my topic, I determined that I must move forward with my project only utilizing English language sources.

39 Although many older people, particularly those associated with the universities before 1962, remain aware of the term. The librarians and archivists, however, did not understand what I was looking for.
preservation and updating of the ‘Trek Out of Burma’- i.e. the 1942 Evacuation and Casualty lists.” This library, established and organized by Anglo-Burmans in Britain looking to research their family histories, would clearly offer invaluable resources concerning Anglo-Burmans and would help to reveal the size and extent of the population. However, only some of the documents are available without a subscription. I attempted to obtain access through NIU’s Curator for the Donn V. Hart Southeast Asia Collection, Hao Phan, but it seems that the University does not have the budget to purchase this subscription. I tried to contact the library to see if there are any subscription options for a single doctoral candidate, but I was unsuccessful in obtaining a response. It may be that the person who had initiated the online presence of the database no longer had funding that would allow them to maintain it. I intend to pursue this angle in postdoctoral research.

Newspapers from Myanmar and the British Empire comprised a critical resource for this dissertation. English-language newspapers provided insight into government policies regarding Anglo-Burmans and the views of laymen and members of the community. These sources—such as *The Times of Burma, The Rangoon Times, The New Light of Burma*, and *The Times of London*—help provide context for rising nationalist movements that shaped Anglo-Burman identities in the twentieth century. Lastly, I used memoirs and personal documents from Anglo-Burmans to better understand how this community viewed themselves as well as their position in society. Because their memoirs—most notably *The Autobiography of a Wanderer in England & Burma, World Overturned: A Burmese Childhood 1933-1947*, and *Through the Jungle of Death: A Boy’s Escape from Wartime Burma*—were drafted for publication, their stories must be taken with a grain of salt. These authors would have crafted their stories to be most appealing to an

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audience, and therefore would mean that they might not accurately represent the community. But the ways racial differences are stressed or glossed over reveals how they interpreted their ethnic and national identities. As these memoirs were largely written by those that emigrated out of Burma in the mid twentieth century, however, they only provide a limited perspective of those that inevitably sided more with their European rather than Burmese heritage.

**Dissertation Structure**

One, “The Making of Anglo-Burmans”, argues that British negative reactions to miscegenation and Burmese women, as well as the Anglo-Burmese offspring, shaped how British Burmans understood their place in Burma prior to the Government of India Act of 1935. They were above the Burmese because of their British blood, but their partial Burmese ethnicity made them inherently not British. This chapter explains how people born of one English or European parent and one “local” (although not necessarily Burman) parent came to be construed as “Anglo-Burman”. I examine the manner in which the British came to rule Burma in the nineteenth century and the social and political changes this engendered. British imperialism directly challenged Burmese identities, making local people rethink how they understood themselves and their relationships to others. This chapter also details the history of miscegenation between European men and Burmese women, which, while never officially legislated against in British Burma, was frowned on by the metropole from the beginning. Miscegenation challenged British superiority as well as creating a population of mixed-raced people that complicated the racial hierarchy even further.\(^{41}\)

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Two examines the history of the Anglo-Burmese from 1935-1944. It assesses the importance of the Government of India Act in 1935 in creating the parameters for what it meant to be Anglo-Indian. This Act was the first effort to establish legal definitions for “Anglo-Burman.” It was also the beginning of debates regarding the weight of blood versus domicile in determining belonging. Additionally, this period saw the rise of a Buddhist-dominated Burmese nationalism that aggressively spoke out against the “aliens” that had power over them in their country. These “aliens” included the British, Anglo-Burmans, and Indians. There were also violent conflicts between Buddhist Nationalists and Indians that intimidated the Anglo-Burman community. This chapter also analyzes the importance of World War II for the Anglo-Burman experience. Japanese military success forced the Community to evacuate to India and come to terms with impending Burmese independence. Trying to determine the best path forward for themselves, Anglo-Burmans held a conference in Simla in 1944. At this conference the major leaders of Anglo-Burman associations determined they would stop seeking special privileges from the British and embrace their Burmese heritage. This drastic shift, however, created confusion among those not at the conference. Not all members of the community agreed to the change and struggled with how to define themselves in this new context.

Three argues that the Simla conference was not the major turning point that many hoped it would be. Anglo-Burmans were unable to abandon their place in British society and continued to try and find a place them above the Burmese. As Burma prepared for independence, the Community continued to struggle with their future. Burmese nationalists were also more outspoken against anyone not conforming to their vision of the future, causing many more Anglo-Burmans to try and leave the country. However, there were quite a few officials in London that believed Anglo-Burmans should remain in their homeland. This contradiction created many obstacles for British Burmans who wanted to emigrate from Burma. The
Community was also confronted more directly with issues of race, finding that some Britons believed Eurasians were not white enough to live in Britain. Anglo-Burmans found themselves between two nations that did not want them. Due to this confusion, British Burmans looking for assistance felt the British were ignoring them, creating even more tension. In their pleas for assistance, many addressed the fact that they had very close affinities with the British and deserved to be treated better. Just because they wanted to leave Burma, however, it did not mean they were abandoning their Anglo-Burman identity. They were merely acknowledging that they identified more with their British heritage than they did with their Burmese.

Four argues that the changing international landscape of the late 1940 and 1950s continued to complicate Anglo-Burmans’ sense of belonging. It analyzes British views regarding the Anglo-Burman community after independence and details how new definitions of British citizenship in the 1950s created different obstacles for the Eurasians. While British citizenship was legally based on parentage, many believed domicile and race should play an important factor. After World War II, notions of Britishness in the United Kingdom were shifting away from their inclusive and multiracial notions based on the empire, to a more exclusive idea focused on race and skin color. Therefore, those raised in Asian countries, with Asian blood, were not British, and should not be considered eligible for assistance schemes designed to allow safe passage for colonial subjects to permanent residence in the United Kingdom. Additionally, many British officials, looking more inwards to the needs of Britain, tried to actively discourage Anglo-Burman immigration. They stressed their differences, as well as the financial burden the Community would put on the government. This was not an uncontested view, as other British officials that believed Anglo-Burmans should be given assistance, arguing that while they were still different and separate from pure Britons, they were partially British, and shared many similarities.
My final chapter, more of an epilogue to 1962 than a discrete chapter, investigates the history of Anglo-Burman identities after Burmese independence. Anglo-Burmans believed they did not receive the social, political, and economic safety and security they expected after 1947. Therefore, many tried again to emigrate to Australia and New Zealand. In order to do this, however, they needed British assistance. In short, they were forced to, once again, prove they were British “enough”. This time they had to battle more racialized exclusionary tactics. They also challenged their detractors by arguing their community upheld British ideals more so than Britons did. The dissertation concludes with a brief examination of the contemporary Anglo-Burmese diaspora. The Ne Win Coup in 1962 created more problems for the people trying to fit into Burmese society. Ne Win’s government became more exclusionary, and disallowed any English language schools, schools which played critical roles in the upbringing of Anglo-Burmans. The government also restricted movement out of the country, which caused much concern for Community members. These more restrictive policies in Burma, as well as the dissolution of certain structures within the country that helped the community feel at home, led many more to flee the country when they could, and eventually, this community ceased to exist in Burma—present day Myanmar. These migrations left to the development of Anglo-Burman communities in Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. Present day Anglo-Burmans in these communities still continue to struggle with their sense of belonging.

Anglo-Burmans in the twentieth century struggled to find their place in a constantly changing world. Their sense of belonging was consistently challenged by the push for Burmese independence and growing nationalism. The cultural and political traits that defined their position in society were changing, and they struggled to keep their footing. These changing situations also forced many members of the community to communicate what they felt it meant to be Anglo-Burman and what they needed in order to survive. Unfortunately, the longer many
stayed in Burma during independence and after, the more they realized those traits would not be a part of the new Union of Burma. Today, this population that was initially raised in Burma only survives in small communities outside of present-day Myanmar.
CHAPTER 1

The Making of the Anglo-Burman Community

Their differentiation was not only based on the color of their skin. Many members of this population struggled to support themselves financially. And as their avenues to more lucrative positions within the EIC became limited, the number of Eurasians living in poverty grew. By the nineteenth century, British fears over racial degeneration contributed to their growing concern over mixed-race populations. Having a group of people claim European heritage while also being exposed to local habits and customs as well as living in poverty negatively affected the image of British superiority. As mentioned above, the threat that poor Europeans diminished European power in the colonies is also the reason domiciled Europeans were classified with Anglo-Indians—and eventually Anglo-Burmans. Race and class were intricately linked. Being a poor domiciled European was just as detrimental as being partially European.¹ This intersectional understanding of racial degeneration, the mixing of races as well as the perception of poor whites in the colonies. Being white meant not being domiciled in a colony and not mixing with local populations. Because domiciled Europeans defied one, if not both, of those guidelines, they were not considered entirely white. But they were in fact European.² Therefore, the Anglo-Burman population was eventually incorporated into these definitions of race and class that would shape their place in British Burma.

² Mitzutani, 60.
Conquering Burma

The conquest of Burma was a consequence of British imperialism in India. India was the East India Company’s (EIC) precious possession. Britain’s colonization of the subcontinent began informally through the EIC’s trade monopolies in the seventeenth century. As their trade interests grew, their approaches to the region became much more invasive. They established three small Presidencies—Bombay, Madras, and Fort William in Bengal—where they held economic control. They had also leased more than twenty trading posts, in return for which Indian rulers were given assistance fighting each other, combatting piracy, and collecting taxes. Their work collecting taxes in Bengal brought them great wealth, causing the EIC to slowly switch the majority of their efforts from trade to taxation.\(^3\) India became very profitable for both the EIC, and therefore for the Crown, who received 400,000 pounds of silver each year from the Company. The loss of India would have had severe ramifications for British interests in North America, the Caribbean, and for its wars in Europe. Thus in 1733 the Prime Minister, Lord North’s government passed the Regulating Act to formally establish a government authority in EIC run territories. This created a governor-general to oversee the presidencies, as well as a supreme court with judges appointed from London. The Act was the first step in chipping away at the EIC’s power and establishing more direct.\(^4\) By the 1820s, the EIC was acting like a government, with administrators looking to not only gain revenues, but change cultural traditions.\(^5\)

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\(^4\) Cavaliero, 50-55.

The Sepoy Rebellion in 1857 proved to be a turning point for the British Empire in India. Indian soldiers revolted against British treatment, namely due to the EIC’s insensitivity to Indian religions and local, exorbitant taxation, blatant racism, and unstoppable British expansion. The British managed to end the uprising. The EIC was then removed from control, and the British imposed direct rule through the Government of India Act (1858). They created a new Indian civil service to run the colony with appointments made through examinations. Colonial officials reported directly to the British Government in London through the newly created India Office. For the first time, a British colony had its own separate government department. It was this system that eventually absorbed Burma as well.6

One of the biggest factors that determined British policy in India was their competition with other European powers. India was seen as a financial gold mine for the British, and they were concerned other European powers would try and encroach. Above all they needed to protect the revenues from sugar plantations, which often prompted them to acquire surrounding lands in order to buffer their profits from the French, Dutch, and Portuguese, such as territories along the Burmese border.7

The British colonization of Burma took place over three separate campaigns—1824-1826, 1852-1953, and 1885-1886.8 Britain’s foray into Burma, however, began informally with the EIC in the seventeenth century. While they sent envoys to the Burmese royal court, they remained more focused on other parts of Asia. Despite British encounters in Burma in the eighteenth century, their influence remained very limited until the Anglo-Burmese Wars. The

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7 Cavaliero, 6-7.
British were one of several different communities—including Chinese, European, and Middle-
Eastern—vying for the attention of the Burmese court. Although the Burmese were in fact
interested in British trade, they had many other trade avenues open to them as well. Additionally,
while India remained the EIC’s priority, they did not feel the need to divert attention from their
interests there. The British merely wanted to make sure the French did not gain too much
influence in Burma as they did not want the French sharing a border with India.9

It was this desire to protect the Indian territories that led to the first Anglo-Burmese War.
It began with a misunderstanding over borders. The EIC felt their financial interests along the
Burmese border were being threatened, while the Burmese were simply looking for human labor
to use in their public works. Historically, the Burmese king had always recruited corvée labour in
this way from lands over which he held sovereignty. This dispute led to war in March of 1824.10
British advantages in military technology gave them the ability to push through to the Burmese
capital. To end hostilities, on February 4th, 1826, the British and the Burmese signed a treaty
agreeing to a cease fire.11 The Burmese agreed to not interfere in Jaintia, Cachar, and Assam—
territories under dispute between the Burmese and the British. Additionally, they agreed to ceded
Manipur, Arakan, and Tennasserim to the British. The Burmese were also required to pay a 10-
million-rupee indemnity for losses the British incurred during the hostilities. The British agreed
to withdraw to Rangoon after the first payment, and then to withdraw from Rangoon after the
second payment.12

9 Michael Aung-Thwin and Maitri Aung-Thwin, A History of Myanmar since Ancient Times: Traditions and

10 Aung-Thwin and Aung-Thwin, 177.


The origins of the second Anglo-Burmese War in 1852 were much different from the first conflict. While the Burmese and British remained frustrated with each other, the British initiated war without much provocation.\textsuperscript{13} Under the terms of the treaty agreed after the first Anglo-Burman War in 1826, the British were supposed to withdraw from Rangoon. When the British did not leave, as they had agreed, the Burmese became wary. In turn, the British were angered when the Burmese increased regulations against British shipping.\textsuperscript{14} These frustrations came to a head in December of 1851, with war breaking out the following month. Once again, the Burmese agreed to secede from lower Burma, leaving the British all land along the coasts in Burma.\textsuperscript{15} The Third Anglo-Burmese War was caused by British commercial interests, concerns for Indian security, and competition with the French. Policy makers in India and London grew more and more concerned about what they perceived was the political insecurity of the Burmese court. In the meantime, the Burmese court tried to sign a treaty of friendship with France in 1885 as a way to prevent complete British colonization. To the British, however, this move proved the French were trying to unseat British control in India, and they marched on Mandalay to prevent any further such autonomous actions. On January 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1886, the British formally annexed the Burmese Kingdom, dissolved the court, and exiled the royal family to India for the rest of their lives.\textsuperscript{16}

For the Burmese, these changes brought about by British control forced them to reevaluate how they understood their place in society. To many, their individual, religious, and

\textsuperscript{13} Aung-Thwin and Aung-Thwin, 177.

\textsuperscript{14} Thant Myint-U, 22-23.

\textsuperscript{15} Aung-Thwin and Aung-Thwin, 177.

\textsuperscript{16} Aung-Thwin and Aung-Thwin, 188-89.
ethnic definitions were “fluid, syncretic, multiple, or even undefined.” Often their understandings of themselves changed depending on the context. For instance, someone who spoke Burmese as their primary language, and wore Burmese style clothing, often did not consider themselves to be Burmese. But the colonial officials wanted to find a way to codify Burmese identities. British colonization drastically altered the way Burmese people all over the country thought about their ethnic and religious identities. Colonization helped to create a system that tried to simplify complex identities. This system would work against the Anglo-Burman community during the country’s road to independence. This community struggled to fit into specific and limiting definitions the British wanted to use.

The British approach to imperialism in Burma was also quite different from how they had proceeded in the past. The ideal was to rule through collaboration with elites, which was less costly and provided political continuity and legitimacy. Within the first few months of colonizing Burma, however, they “effectively dismantled the existing institutions of political authority.” Burma became a state of British India, and they were governed according to the Government of India Act (1858). They not only abolished the monarchy, they also eradicated the nobility, royal agencies, and the army. The political framework that had governed the country for three hundred years was gone. First, they exiled King Thibaw as well as his entire family—rather than putting another prince on the throne who would allow them to rule indirectly. The old system of interrelated royal families that were in charge of administering the Burmese empire was also completely dismantled. What was even more puzzling was the British decision to not take advantage of local ruling elites. In other colonial contexts, even when they chose formal

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17 Charney, 8-9.

18 Thant Myint-U, 2-3.
colonization, the British frequently ruled through local elites, often leaving most of the day-today governing to locals. While this was the tactic they took with the Shan, it was not how they handled things in central Burma. The British “imposed bureaucratic control right down to the village level” in central Burma. Additionally, British occupation of central Burma remained a military occupation.¹⁹ The Burmese in central Burma continued to rise up against colonial authority through the end of the nineteenth century. Therefore the British determined they needed to exert total control and keep the military ever present so the Burmese knew the British were ready to respond to violent resistance with violence.²⁰

British colonization also drastically altered social systems in Burma. With British civil servants handling lower level administration rather than local leaders, people did not develop personal relationships with those in positions of power. The British did so consciously, wanting to sever the bonds between hereditary leaders and local people. But as a consequence, they also terminated social and cultural bonds that formed the foundations of many Burmese communities. Rather than going to families and people they traditionally looked up to when they needed mediation, they had to look to “strangers who only came around periodically to collect taxes.”²¹ The influx of capital and people into Rangoon also produced new social categories. British colonization created new financial and employment opportunities located between the colonial government and Burmese society. Some locals “became the first to think about political identity, community and social reform,” using recently acquired English language.²² This created an

¹⁹ Thant Myint-U, 4-5.
²⁰ Aung-Thwin, 9.
²¹ Aung-Thwin, 199.
²² Aung-Thwin, 208.
avenue for expression and employment that many Anglo-Burmans would fill in the twentieth century.

The legal system in colonial Burma was modelled on British India. To local populations, British colonization was rigid and lacked the flexibility of the former Burmese system. Importing the legal system from India made it more complicated. Adapting to Indian laws to Burmese society proved difficult. Locals believed the new system was “completely impersonal and ‘cold.’” Most of the Burmese felt that the British legal system with detached judges and foreign bailiffs went against traditional Burmese systems of focusing on reaching peace rather than punishment. The Burmese concept of justice differed drastically from the British Indian system. Under the British, there were constant reminders that the Burmese were no longer in control of their own country. Eventually, this new language and legal system would be the means by which some Burmese resisted the British, but early on, they were just symbols of oppression.\(^{23}\)

Colonization also challenged Burmese notions of community. Colonial surveyors, at the behest of British officials, “demarcated the space that constituted British Burma and the communities that belonged to it.” It forced locals to rethink of how they saw their own country. Additionally, ethnographers, political officers, and local interpreters began trying to categorize the people of Burma into distinct categories. They wanted to “organize Burmese society and culture into ‘inviolable’ documents and reports.”\(^{24}\) They also collected knowledge about local languages to codify them into dictionaries, which drastically changed the way languages naturally modified over time. By creating strict classifications, they froze identities and created new ones. They also based many of the categories on their limited understandings of local

\(^{23}\) Aung-Thwin, 201-202.

\(^{24}\) Aung-Thwin, 198.
conceptions of concepts such as religion, law, race, politics, and language, which created new understandings of difference. Due to the needs of local administrators and elites to organize the colony into something they could more easily understand, they created new communities and identities that would eventually lead to the complications the Anglo-Burman community confronted in the twentieth century.  

Formal colonization did not spell the end of conflicts in Burma, however. The frontier areas continued to rise up against the British – perhaps due to the abrupt removal of the royal family and the lack of a replacement. Because of this, the colonizers decided they needed to take a much more aggressive approach. They maintained a strong military presence in Burma throughout the period of British rule, which proved to be a constant reminder to many that they were being ruled by foreigners. They also altered many of the existing Burmese governmental systems and forced the Burmese to adapt to an increasingly powerful British presence. British officials conducted extensive censuses in 1872, 1881, and then every ten years after that until 1931. In them, they “demanded information on every aspect of people’s lives, from their occupation to their religion, and about every member of the household.” As was done in Europe, the answers on the censuses needed to be “single, unqualified answers as to their affiliation with a prescribed set of exclusive ethnic categories.”

Colonial officials also described Burma as a “plural society.” Rather than communities mixing and blending, they lived in distinct, separate spheres. As Furnivall put it, Burma was “a medley, for they mix but do not combine.” These groups lived side-by-side and interacted in public. But they kept to themselves, for the most part, in their personal lives. Even occupations


26 Aung-Thwin, 12.
could be divided along racial lines. Indians were known to be money lenders, Europeans were business men and high-level officials, Burmans were farmers and merchants. Early academic definitions of the plural society, however, have been problematized. For instance, mixed-race populations, such as the Indo-Burmese, had more fluid identities that they were able to use to their advantage in the British legal system. British colonial family law used the religious customs of the family to resolve legal issues. They equated ethnicities with particular religions. So Burmese families were adjudicated by Buddhist laws, and Indians by either Muslim or Hindu laws. But families with mixed Burmese and Indian heritage often times created complications for British courts. The legal system assumed one would assimilate into the traditions and customs of the other. But this often times did not work. Members of this population “opportunistically and adaptively reconfigured cultural elements to fashion new and distinct configurations of practices, habits and hierarchies.” Indo-Burmese, Sino-Burmese, and Anglo-Burmese populations created their own new cultures and traditions. They blended particular aspects of different cultures and created complications for the British.

Miscegenation

Relationships between British men and Burmese women was a significant aspect of British Burma, because they could create a mixed-race population with partial European heritage. British traders often initiated relationships with Burmese women. Women worked as traders in local markets. By aligning themselves with these women, European merchants could gain access


to the market, as well as learn the local languages and customs.\textsuperscript{29} The perceived high status of Burmese women also played an important role behind the motivations for these relationships. Many British men, because women were the ones running the local markets, believed gender roles in Burma were reversed. Therefore, women were the dominant gender because they were the breadwinners. They also considered Burmese men to be “lazy and backwards.”\textsuperscript{30} Although these labels were over simplistic and demeaning, they helped the British to justify their superiority. The British labeled certain colonized men as effeminate or unmanly as way to delegitimize them. Effeminate men could not be a threat and needed the manly British to show them how to be proper rulers.\textsuperscript{31}

Others also tried to belittle interracial relationships by degrading Burmese women. For instance, one travel writer claimed that British men who had engaged in relationships with Burmese women had found their partners “very faithful in all respects,” but they also considered the women to be “vengeful and unforgiving.” He even accused some Burmese temporary-wives of killing English brides that had been brought to Burma.\textsuperscript{32} Another traveler claimed that, "Submissive in trifling things, the women are frequently violent in temper; and then they display remarkable command of a copious and forcible language of abuse."\textsuperscript{33} Burmese women were

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\textsuperscript{30} Frank Vincent, \textit{The Land of the White Elephant: Sights and Scenes in South-Eastern Asia A Personal Narrative of Travel and Adventure in Farther India Embracing the Countries of Burma, Siam, Cambodia, and Cochin-China (1871-2)} (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, & Searle, 1873), 27.


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viewed as literal threats to colonization. These perspectives of Burmese women also influenced the treatment of Anglo-Burmans. Although they had European ancestry, which thereby placed them above Asians, they also had Asian blood. This made them below Europeans. By belittling the Burmese, it became clear that by having this shared blood with their mothers, they too were less than British.

Depicting Burmese women as masculine was another way Britons expressed concerns about the power and status of Burmese women. Travelers, for instance, found that Burmese women in the marketplace were a threat to European men. Much like the actions of white women in late nineteenth century Britain, Burmese women’s public activities were viewed as threatening.34 First of all, they claimed all of the stalls were “held by monkeyish females, who, with the pretentious airs and graces of a tickled kitten, mincing and ogling and dandying themselves about.” These women were considered to be “marvelous business women, [that] always try to cheat you if they possibly can.”35 Local women being those in control of the economy concerned some Europeans. Therefore, they dismissed this ‘status’ and diminished Burmese women.

Some authors, such as C. Harcourt Robertson, depicted the work ethic of Burmese women as admirable, while portraying Burmese men as lazy and ineffectual. The illustrations of these women did not necessarily portray them in a degrading manner, but by showing them as masculine makes them naturally incompatible for British men. Six of Robertson’s twenty-four vignettes focused on various women and their occupations. And every woman was described as


hard working and capable of supporting herself financially. Some of these women were also married to a “beautiful, vain, idle creature”, such as the Match Maker, Ma Thu Yin, who was very successful, but married to a man who refused to do any work and gambled and drank with her money.\textsuperscript{36} It was more natural for Burmese women to take on more masculine roles while being in relationship with emasculated men. Since British men were not un-masculine, they would not be appropriate partners for Burmese women.

Negative perceptions of Burmese women and interracial relationships also infiltrated British literature in the twentieth century. The drama at the center of George Orwell’s \textit{Burmese Days} was the interracial relationship between the main character, Flory, and his Burmese mistress Ma Hla May. Flory, a civil servant in Burma, resented his relationship with Ma Hla May. To him, she was dirty, smelled bad, and looked like a boy. After having sexual relations with her, she became “nauseating and dreadful to him.”\textsuperscript{37} But the absence of European women left him with few options for companionship. Orwell also portrayed Ma Hla May as a moneygrubbing woman who only wanted to be with Flory for the status being with a European man afforded her in Burmese society. There was no chance for love or a lasting relationship.\textsuperscript{38} This relationship also negatively impacted Flory’s standing among the European community in Burma. Although he immediately terminated his relationship with Ma Hla May after he fell in love with a young British woman, Elizabeth, the stain of his actions stayed with him. When Elizabeth learned of Flory’s relationship with a Burmese woman, she terminated their courtship and refused to associate with him any longer. After Flor had managed to convince Elizabeth to

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\item[\textsuperscript{36}] C. Harcourt Robertson, \textit{Burmese Vignettes: 24 Sketches of Burmese Life and Character}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (London: Luzac & Company, 1949), 144-146.
\item[\textsuperscript{38}] Orwell, 54-55.
\end{itemize}
speak with him again, Ma Hla May interrupted a Church sermon where Elizabeth, Flory, and most of the other European community members were in attendance. After she stormed into the church, looking unkempt and disheveled, “shrieking like a maniac,” she detailed the nature of their relationship and how Flory had abandoned her and left her for ruin. When Ma Hla May had been removed from the Church and all the Europeans began to leave, everyone shunned Flory. His affair had been made very public and all his credibility was gone. His chances with Elizabeth were also ruined. The only solution he could see was to kill himself. To Orwell, being with a Burmese woman was degrading, it cheapened his status as an European. Eurasians, therefore, provided a physical reminder that some Europeans participated in these demeaning liaisons.

After 1885, British Colonial authorities began to claim that these relationships with Burmese women could prove detrimental to British rule. They were also concerned about the creation of an Anglo-Burman population, that would be a physical representation of British fallibility. Burmese women’s “social freedom and influence over men threatened to undermine colonial power and prestige.” So, the colonial elite was determined to find a way to prohibit sexual relations between British men and Burmese women. While it was never officially banned, there were many that argued men known to be in illicit affairs with Burmese women could be refused promotions or even transferred. For instance, Sir A. Mackenzie, Chief Commissioner of Burma acknowledged that he could understand how men found Burmese women enticing. But he warned young British men that these women were also dangerous. Burmese women, according to Mackenzie, accused British officers of bribery and/or corruption calling into question the officer’s integrity. He stated that “The source of the scandals lay in the fact that

39 Orwell, 273-282.

40 In practice this proved to not be a viable punishment. Those that tried to have officers transferred for relations with Burmese women often found their requests denied.
Burmese women held very loose views on the subject of marriage, and looked upon such connections as in no way disreputable, while their keen commercial instincts prompted them to make all the profit they could out of their relations with any English officer.”  

Mackenzie thought “the prevalence of these connections [was harmful] to the administration, and, in the public interest, efforts must be made to abate it.”

Attempts to encourage more British women to travel to the colonies after World War I were also in vain. While there were more women coming to Burma, “immigrants comprised only five per cent [sic.] of the total female population in 1931, which meant that relations between foreign men and indigenous women continued.”

The Eurasian population made the British fear that their racial hierarchy would be disrupted. In his arguments against miscegenation, Mackenzie argued that this growing population of Anglo-Burmans was of concern because they were “insufficiently educated, and left without proper means of supporting themselves. This [was] likely to become a source of difficulty to the Government, and to bring discredit on the ruling class (i.e. white officers not providing for Anglo-Burmese children).”

Overall, the colonial administration remained relatively quiet concerning miscegenation in Burma. However, there were inter-department discussions concerning the matter, illustrating the concerns many had about colonial authority. In a 1903 letter from the Chief Secretary to the Government of Burma, D.H.R. Twomey explained that the interracial marriages between European gazette officers and Burmese women was discussed by the Colonial Administration in

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1895 and 1896 but dropped when Sir Frederick Fryer was unable to transfer two members of the India Civil Service after they had married Burmese women. However, according to Twomey, the question of British officers marrying Burmese women was being discussed again in 1903 because these marriages were becoming more frequent. He also mentioned that Fryer believed that “the marriage of European officers with Burmese women was harmful to the administration, and he pointed out that the permanency of the marriage relation rendered marriages even more harmful than illicit connections.” Additionally, Twomey also argued that these marriages were discouraged not only because they could be unfortunate for the officer, but also because they could harm the Administration. According to Twomey,

A Burmese wife of an English official is often credited with an influence in official matters which she may or may not possess, but the belief in which is in any case prejudicial to the reputation of her husband. His utility as a public servant is thereby diminished. The prominent part played by women in Burmese life tends to accentuate this impression and to suggest, even where it does not create, an atmosphere of intrigue.

All Burmese women, whether or not they actually did anything to endanger the administration, were a peril due to their reputation among the British. He then went on to say that “his Honour”—although the identity of his Honour was not revealed—agreed with Fryer’s views and considered “the increasing frequency of these marriages as a serious public evil which it is the duty of Government to abate.”

Although Twomey agreed with those that argued the government could not completely disallow intermarriages, he believed these marriages should be regulated. He reasoned that an

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46 D.H.R. Twomey to D. Twomey, 24 Jan 1903.

47 D.H.R. Twomey to D. Twomey, 24 Jan 1903.
officer married to a Burmese woman diminished his “utility as a public servant.” Twomey believed it was the officer’s “duty” before marrying a Burmese woman to inform the Government of his intentions so it could determine “whether the alliance [could] be permitted, consistently with a proper regard for the interests of Government.” He also argued that it was the Government’s responsibility to require its officers to furnish information about the union prior to marriage in order to determine whether or not the marriage should be allowed. He submitted that “rules should be made requiring reports of intended marriages, reserving to Government the right to prohibit marriages of which it disapproves, prescribing penalties for marriage without permission, and requiring reports of the landed property owned by the wife and her relations.”

To Twomey, interracial marriages should be discouraged. He believed they were “a great evil both on account of their prejudicial effect on the administration, and on account of the unhappiness and social ruin which they not infrequently” brought on the officers in them.

Following his conclusion, a draft of the proposed rules for British officers marrying Burmese women listed that officers must inform the Government of their intentions prior to marrying a Burmese woman. They must also provide the government a statement of the social standing, name, occupation, and any property of the woman as well as her “near relatives.” However, if an officer were to disobey the rule, the consequences did not list dismissal. Instead, a transfer with limitations on his ability to be promoted was recommended or if a transfer was not possible, the officer would be unable to be promoted in the future within Burma.

48 D.H.R. Twomey to D. Twomey, 24 Jan 1903.
49 D.H.R. Twomey to D. Twomey, 24 Jan 1903.
50 D.H.R. Twomey to D. Twomey, 24 Jan 1903.
Twomey also received support for his proposed plans, but for different reasons. When his letter was forwarded to His Majesty’s Secretary of State for India, attached was a cover letter from The Government of the India Home Office. According to this letter, the authors:

desire to discourage such marriages by all means in our power, partly on account of the domestic unhappiness and social penalties which they so frequently entail upon the officers who contract them, but mainly because of the grave administrative evils to which they constantly give rise.  

They argued that these marriages often resulted in scandals, and they feared that “there may be an appreciable danger of the whole tone and traditions of the Government services in Burma deteriorating from the high standard which it is essential to maintain.” Their argument centered on the need to maintain superiority over their colonized subjects. Miscegenation diminished the racial hierarchy upon which imperial control rested, therefore, it was a visible threat to the British Empire.

Some Britons also argued that they recognized the improbability of completely prohibiting marriages. They believed that prohibiting marriages entirely would incite criticism from the British public for encouraging men to contract in or continue temporary connections with Burmese women, which they also considered harmful since it was still a visible symbol of the blurring of the racial hierarchy. So while they did not advocate for entirely prohibiting intermarriages, they believed that limiting them by prohibiting them for reasons such as “the woman in question [had] lived openly with an officer as his mistress, that she [was] otherwise of doubtful reputation or [belonged] to a low class, or that the character of her family and relations

51 The Government of India Home Department, manuscript letter to The Right Hon’ble Lord George Francis Hamilton, G.C.S.I., His Majesty’s Secretary of State for India, 26 February 1903, IOR, Public and Judicial Records 1792-1955, L/PJ/6/629 File 517, British Library, London, United Kingdom.
52 The Government of India Home Department to G. Hamilton, 26 Feb 1903.
53 Levine, 178.
54 The Government of India Home Department to G. Hamilton, 26 Feb 1903.
[was] such as to render the connection administratively objectionable.” Lastly, they argued that in the cases just mentioned, it was the colonial administration was responsible for preventing the marriage “in the interests of good government and for the avoidance of imputations on the integrity of our officers which may assume the dimensions of a public scandal.” They therefore argued that they did not encourage prohibiting all marriages, just those that felt posed a threat to their rule in the colony.55

Other letters circulating in the local Colonial Administration prompted continued debates on the subject. In a correspondence between an unknown author in the India Office and the Governor General of India dated 10 April 1903, they both agreed that marriages between British officers and Burmese women were increasing and they should be discouraged. They also agreed that these relationships posed threats to British authority. However, they were also concerned about temporary marriages. While these authors understood such connections were viewed differently in Burmese society, they were detrimental to the British administration. It appeared that that many in the India office, by opposing traditional marriage, they were implicitly encouraging temporary marriages, or worse, prostitution.56 Therefore, discouraging interracial liaisons would only create more threats to British authority.

In another letter to Sir Charles Lyall, a British official expressed a more mixed view about miscegenation in Burma. This author stated that there were some in the colonial administration that believed all Burmese women who married British officers were dishonest and would interfere with the British officer’s duties. However, the author of this letter disagreed. He was an officer in Burma and, although he did not believe that British officers should marry or

55 The Government of India Home Department to G. Hamilton, 26 Feb 1903.
56 Unknown India Official, manuscript letter to His Excellency the Right Honourable the Governor General of India in Council, 10 April 1903, IOR, Public and Judicial Records 1792-1955, L/PJ/6/629 File 517, British Library, London, United Kingdom.
make temporary connections with Burmese women, he believed the government had no right to interfere with who their officers married. He went on to explain how an officer the author was familiar with was married a Burmese woman and did not compromise his job because of his marriage. The officer’s wife never “misconducted herself” in a manner that interfered with her husband’s ability to perform his duties. Although he disagreed with intermarriage, this author believed that disallowing intermarriage on the one hand but saying nothing about “temporary connections” on the other, would only invite criticism about the government. He advised “against the issue of a circular or rules on the matter.”

The Creation of the Anglo-Burman Population

Early schemes to combat poverty among Domiciled Europeans and Eurasians also created a legacy among the identities of this population. In the beginning of the twentieth century, British officials and missionaries identified a lack of education as the leading cause to pauperism among these populations. If being poor was a threat to white superiority, Britons within India were greatly concerned about how to prevent poverty among Eurasians. In the late nineteenth century, it was determined that the lack of access to European-style education played a critical role in white degeneration. Therefore, a commission to combat poverty in India suggested to British colonial officials in Britain and in India that English language education needed to be available to Eurasians. They argued that English language schools would teach the children that attended them to read and write in English, Christianity, and British modes of life. Therefore, in British


58 Unknown to C. Lyall, 17 March 1903.

59 Mitzutani, 128-129.
Burma, the colonial government helped fund Christian missionary run English language schools, about 35 in total by 1942. These schools were mainly for European and Eurasian children, but 15% of the students could be non-whites, and non-Eurasian.60 These attributes would come to play an important role in the Anglo-Burman community’s identity.

With regards to miscegenation, “otherizing” lower class European men enabled Britons to simplify and explain why a British man would enter into a relationship with Burmese women. Only lower-class, poop, British men would have a Burmese woman as a companion, to one British traveler in 1923:

Indeed, when one talks of English society in a place like Rangoon, one must always remember that there are a number of English people who don’t belong to any recognized society, but just float about in the furtive flotsam and jetsam of a great city…God knows where or how they live; probably they have a Burmese mistress in some miserable black-street and subsist on curry, which they eat with their fingers squatting on the floor. These are the people who know the East and have heard its fatal voice.61

Colonial officials fearing racial degeneration grew increasingly concerned about ‘poor whites’ in the colonies. The British justified colonization based on the superiority of their race. But classes of poor whites living as locals disrupted this image. Additionally, being poor meant their inability to return to the metropole would keep them in the colony. They became Domiciled Europeans and continue to degrade the white race. They were also viewed as more likely to engage in interracial relationships with local woman and produce mixed-race children—children that were sometimes viewed as the epitome of racial degeneration. Therefore, Britons began to classify domiciled Europeans with Eurasians, rather than with Europeans.62 Their low class, and

60 A memorandum of the Anglo-Burman Case. Mainly relating to educational and military affairs, 13 August 1942, Papers of Maurice Alfred Maybury, Burma Civil Service 1938-1948, MSS Eur D108, India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, United Kingdom


62 Mizutani, 48-49.
status as “Domiciled Europeans” meant there were less than other Europeans. They were more like Eurasians, thereby removing them as threats to European supremacy.

However, officials’ attempts to stem mixed race relationships were unsuccessful. The Anglo-Burman population grew from 7,132 in 1891 to 19,200 in 1931. This group lived in a liminal place in society. Because they were Burmese, they were denied some of the privileges that those with only European heritage were entitled to. But many believed mixed race children needed to be “Europeanized” to prevent them from adapting local modes of life and degenerating the white race further.63 The emphasis of European modes of life, the emphasis on education, and the importance of Christianity became staples of the European community, and reasons they felt betrayed and abandoned after World War II—as will be discussed in chapter 4.

As this chapter has illustrated, the Anglo-Burman community emerged from the Eurasian community in British India. While colonization had a great impact on many of the local identities in India and later Burma, their feelings toward Burmese women and mixed-race offspring created the precursors to Anglo-Burman identities. Fears of racial degeneration were also critical in the development of the Eurasian community in Burma. In the next chapter, I will examine how the separation from India in 1935 created a new crisis of identity for the Anglo-Burman community.

63 Harriden, 114. Harriden also argued: “The belief that Burmese women were incapable of caring for their own children left colonial authorities to forcibly remove many Eurasian children from their Burmese mothers.” But this author has not found any evidence to support this claim. Harriden used Penny Edwards’ “Half Caste: Staging Race in British Burma,” as evidence of this colonial policy. But Edwards was referencing a memoir from an Anglo-Burman woman whose father removed her from her mother’s care and placed her in a boarding school. However, this was not due to any official policy. The father had divorced the mother and did not want his daughter to be raised in a Burmese household.
CHAPTER 2

Identity Crisis, 1928 – 1944

In 1944, representatives of Anglo-Burmans – dispersed throughout India since the invasion of Burma by the Japanese in 1942 - sent representatives to a conference in Simla in order discuss their role in a decolonized Burma. The resolutions of this conference were meant to be game changers for the future of the Anglo-Burman Community, which had been called into question by the tumultuous events of 1935 to 1944. While World War II was the immediate cause of the Simla conference, the Government of India Act (1935) solidified Anglo-Burmans as being more aligned with their British heritage rather than Burmese. They were concerned for their future in this new Burma and wanted to stress their importance to the British as a way to secure their future. This choice also created the groundwork for the Simla conference and its aftermath. The outbreak of World War II and the growth of Burmese Nationalism also played important roles in laying the frame work for Anglo-Burman reactions to assisted passage schemes after Burmese independence. Up until the 1944 Simla conference—discussed in the next chapter—Anglo-Burmans sought security and safety with the British. Therefore, they stressed the more European aspects of their identity. Primarily, they stressed shared religions, upbringings, language, and education; all traits that some would try to set aside after 1944. However, British actions towards the Community during evacuation and after left many feeling betrayed by the British, creating even more anxieties. The chapter that follows shows how Anglo-Burmans—largely represented
by a couple of prominent British Burmans—developed deep-seeded concerns for their future between 1935 and 1944.

**The Government of Burma Act (1935)**

The Government of India Act (1935) proved to be one of the precursors to the Simla Conference concerning the future of the Anglo-Burman community. Overall, it created greater uncertainty and change in Burma. The Act initially came about due to discontent amongst Indian nationalists, who were incensed at British indifference to their participation in World War I and the indignities of Home Rule. As civil unrest intensified in the 1920s, British officials realized reforms they had instituted after World War I were not sufficient. Economic hardship also played an important role in Indian dissatisfaction with the British. People unable to afford housing and food due to British policies turned to violence. Therefore, the India Office decided to authorize The Indian Statutory Commission—also known as the Simon Commission for the chairman John Simon—to gauge local public opinion and discern the best path forward for the British between 1927 and 1928. One of the commission’s proposals was that Burma and India should be separated. The Commission argued that, because the two countries were so different, Burma was lagging behind India in “constitutional progress.” Many other populations, such as elite businessmen, ethnic Karens who were predominantly Christian, “British Burmans” (later to be called Anglo-Burmans), and legislative council members agreed that the best way forward for Burma was to separate from India. The greatest concern for most was how to secure equal

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representation in a remarkably diverse country. Ethnic minorities were concerned that ethnic Burmans in central Burma would dominate the legislature. After a series of meetings among British officials and prominent Burmans and ethnic minorities, however, the Simon Commission determined on June of 1930 that “ties to British India were not in the interests of the Burmese and that a quick separation which included the establishment of a Burmese constitution with several political guarantees would improve the climate and atmosphere in which Burmese political reform functioned.”

Members of the British Burman Association, established in 1928 to make recommendations concerning separation, agreed that severing Burma and India was the best way forward. To this association, Burma and India had too many differences to remain together. They also wanted to make it clear that this group did not believe the new Government in Burma, which would allow for more Burmese control, would necessarily be dangerous for the Anglo-Burmans. The Burmanization of services would not necessarily negatively impact Eurasians. It would depend on the individual to make themselves successful. They believed the best way forward was to be their own separate race in Burma, like other ethnic minorities. It was also best to not disrupt the Burmanization process by begging to keep their privileged status. Instead, they should do whatever was best to advance the interests of their motherland. While this only represented to sentiments of a small number of Anglo-Burmans, it illustrates the varied ways British Burmans tried to secure their future in a drastically changing Burma.

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4 Memorandum on behalf of the Anglo-Indian, Anglo-Burman and Domiciled European Community of Burma, October 1928, India Office Records (hereafter IOR), Commission, Committee, and Conference Records 1895-1948 Q/13/1/7, British Library, United Kingdom.
This separation would have a drastic impact on how Anglo-Burmans imagined their futures. Crucially, it officially created the designation of “Anglo-Burman” as opposed to “Anglo-Indian”. As explained in the previous chapter, people who could trace their descent through European and local parentage, anywhere in “British India” – including Burma – prior to 1935 were considered Anglo-Indians. While many Eurasians in Burma referred to themselves as Anglo-Burmans, the designation was not officially recognized by the administration until the separation from India. The 1935 Act also had immediate economic, political, and social consequences for all Burmans. The creation of the designation “Anglo-Burman” created a shift in how the British categorized various Burmese populations. No longer were they an extension of an Anglo-Indian community with whom they did not have much in common. They were identified solely by the shared experiences of those living in Burma. This change in title also strengthened racial lines of identity between Anglo-Burmans and the British. Eurasians admitted that while Europeans and Anglo-Burmans were similar, Europeans in Burma could expect that their “residence [was] of a permanent nature” rather than designating them as intrinsically, ethnically, Burman. Anglo-Burmans, on the other hand, were the “sons of the soil.” To the Anglo-Burman community, the defining factor of their difference from Europeans was their domiciled status. The two communities shared education, language, traditions, and culture—traits that the community felt determined to uphold in the future.

The Act also legally separated Burma from India and gave a modicum of self-governance to the country, which contributed to Burmese Nationalist’ anger, and eventually Anglo-Burman

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6 All India and Delhi Evidence File, Memorandum of the Governing Body of the Anglo-Indian and Domiciled European Association, All India and Burma, Submitted to the Indian Franchise Committee, Delhi, 22 March 1932, IOR, Commission, Committee, and Conference Records 1895-1948, Q/IFC/36, British Library, United Kingdom.
anxieties. The British Governor remained the head of the colony, selected by British officials in London. He also had an appointed Council of Ministers. The Governor was also responsible for appointing the Chief Minister—to be called the Prime Minister. The Governor and Ministers would be responsible for the Legislature, the Parliament that consisted of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Senate comprised of 36 members, 18 elected and 18 chosen by the Governor. The House of Representatives had 132 elected seats—however, 40 of those seats were reserved for minority groups, such as Anglo-Burmans. 7 Those that paid any municipal tax were qualified to vote in the cities. Participants in the rural areas were entitled to vote if they paid property taxes. However, any laws that were passed were subject to a veto from the Governor or the Secretary of State. 8 Thus, even though Burma was now a separate colony and had “limited self-government,” Burmese nationalists were still unsatisfied. They did not like that the British Governor still had control over the “economic wealth of the country.” They also felt that Europeans, Indians, Eurasians, and other ethnic minorities had more power in the government than the central Burmans. 9 In particular, the 1935 Act designated that two seats out of the 132 in the Burmese House of Representatives would be set aside for Anglo-Burmans, in consideration of the fact that the population was estimated at around 20,000 in 1931. At this time, the total population of the colony was estimated at under 15,000,000, indicating that these allotted seats gave the Anglo-Burman community more representation per capita than most other ethnic groups in the country. 10

9 Charney, 49.
Alongside concrete definitions of “Anglo-Burman” came the increasingly important need to officially delineate the boundaries between certain populations that were closely related to the British. Officials struggled over how to differentiate Anglo-Burmans, domiciled Europeans, and Europeans not domiciled, but otherwise present, in India or Burma. These definitions were crucial for electoral purposes. But the question was, should these definitions be based on blood, or domicile? In the end, officials attempted to find a compromise between the two. According to the final Act, a European was “a British subject of European descent in the male line who is resident in Burma.” This person and their father also had to be born in, or domiciled within, the United Kingdom, a British possession, or an Indian State. An Anglo-Burman,\(^\text{11}\) on the other hand, was a British subject who was “resident in Burma” and had to be of “European descent in the male line” or:

is of mixed Asiatic and non-Asiatic descent, and whose father, grandfather or more remote ancestor in the male line was born in the continent of Europe, Canada, Newfoundland, New Zealand, Australia, the Union of South Africa or the United States of America.\(^\text{12}\)

In this instance, domiciled Europeans did not have their own category for electoral purposes, while domiciled Europeans were often grouped with Anglo-Burmans—as mentioned in the previous chapter—for electoral purposes they were classified as European. What this does illustrate is that Anglo-Burmans had to be considered ‘different’ not only because they were of mixed ancestry, but because they were raised differently. Not living predominantly in the United Kingdom differentiated someone from being considered a ‘European’.

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\(^\text{11}\) While the act actually read “Anglo-Indian,” officials admitted it was an oversight and should have been “Anglo-Burman”.

These definitions, however, were highly contested. Europeans, British officials, and Anglo-Burmans themselves all debated the importance of domicile over blood. For instance, the European Association—an organization for people who claimed to be “pure Europeans” living abroad—was against stressing domicile in their definitions. They even went as far as to state that they would “accept no definition that is not based on race.”

Basing definitions purely on one’s domicile status would have meant that Anglo-Burmans living in the United Kingdom could be considered European, which was unacceptable to Europeans in India and Burma. Many officials recognized that basing these population identities on domicile would cause problems. It would create issues regarding domiciled Europeans. The European Association was also concerned that Anglo-Burmans and Anglo-Indians would be able to incorporate Domiciled Europeans into their ranks, giving them stronger electoral clout. Aubrey Dibdin from the Political Office of Burma, looking back at when the act was put in place, explained, “the European Association and the interests it represents will on the other hand wish on racial grounds to retain them in the European category.” He also added that, the Domiciled European “community itself will not improbably strongly resent any attempt to merge it for electoral purposes with the person of mixed Asiatic and non-Asiatic decent who comprise the Anglo-Indian community.”

While these categories were meant to only delineate electoral categories, it was clearly much more than an administrative issue to the people concerned. The notions of domicile and race baffled colonial officials throughout the empire. Some assumed that Europeans would not want to be

13 Definition of European and Anglo-Indian, 13 April 1935, IOR, Burma Office Records 1932-1948, M/1/101, British Library, United Kingdom.

14 Aubrey Dibdin, manuscript letter to Mr. Gilchrist Political Department, 5 January 1948, IOR, Burma Office Records 1932-1948, M/1/101, British Library, United Kingdom. While this letter is from 1948, in this section, he summarized arguments made in 1935.

15 Webster, 19.
lumped in with people of mixed Asian blood, because race and blood meant so much more than simply who can vote on which subjects.

There were concerns that people of mixed race could claim advantages that could be denied to some Europeans, thereby complicating their racial hierarchy. As Dibdin explained:

it is perhaps unnecessary seriously to consider the suggestion of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce that the definitions should be based on domicile irrespective of race, which would result in an Indian domiciled in the UK but temporarily resident in India voting as a European, and would leave European British subjects not domiciled in India or the U.K. unprovided for.\(^{16}\)

This convoluted explanation of the problem illustrates the concerns some British officials had regarding domicile as the basis for population definitions. It also shows how Anglo-Burmans complicated European identities. Europeans were genuinely concerned that their elite status could be compromised if people of mixed-race, those who were “different” merely because they had at least one Asian blood relation, had the same privileges.\(^{17}\)

On the other hand, there were those that argued domicile was a much more significant factor in determining identity. For instance, a member of the Reform Department in the Government of India went as far to claim that the definitions that emphasized domicile over race “appear to us too unsatisfactory to be repeated.” The author of this note claimed that the Indian Government did “not wish to extend existing privileges far beyond their (?) present) scope.” These rejected definitions would have conferred European status indefinitely to Europeans domiciled in India, even though in prior identity definitions, the status was lost after two generations of domiciled Europeans in India. He concluded his argument by explaining that “we would not propose to set up indefinitely distinction of European blood in the face of continued

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\(^{16}\) Aubrey Dibdin to Mr. Gilchrist, 5 January 1948.

domicile."\textsuperscript{18} Living somewhere long enough, or growing up in a particular location, clearly influenced one’s identity, and would make them less “European” over time. Anglo-Burmans were unable to fit into clearly defined ethnic lines. Domicile and race played crucial roles in their identities and trying to deny this caused problems for colonial officials.

One thing the aforementioned Reform Department member emphasized was the importance of one’s blood, rather than their domicile. They argued that “discrimination between the Indian community on the one hand and the European and Anglo-Indian communities taken together on the other must, we think, rest on blood, a criterion which seems universally accepted.” While blood was well understood to be the defining factor in determining difference and justifying elite status among those with European blood, this author argued that those in the Reform Department believed “individuals who derive European blood from [the] female side only should fall into category of Indians. The general social feeling is that the child of Indian father and European mother should be treated as Indian.”\textsuperscript{19} This solidified a crucial aspect to the categories of mixed-raced populations; the idea that the male heritage determines one’s identity. It also created complicated identity definitions. As happened across the empire, attempts definitions of identity often overlapped with one another.\textsuperscript{20} If one had all European heritage, they were European, unless they were the third generation to be domiciled in India, then they were Anglo-Burman. If they had a European father and Indian mother, they are Anglo-Burman. But if they had an Indian father and a European mother, they should be Indian. The creation of the Government of India Act played a critical role in Anglo-Burman identities. This role would

\textsuperscript{18} Government of India, Reform Department, telegram to Secretary of State for India, New Delhi, 10 April 1935, IOR, Burma Office Records 1932-1948, M/1/101, British Library, United Kingdom.

\textsuperscript{19} Government of India, Reform Department to Secretary of State for India, New Delhi, 10 April,1935.

prove important after the Simla conference in 1944 and the emigration schemes of the 1950s. These tensions concerning domicile or blood would prove crucial in the arguments for or against assisted passage schemes.

**Burmese Nationalism**

World War II also drastically altered the future of the Anglo-Burmese community. Leading up to the War, Burmese nationalism was rapidly growing, stemming from the Burman Buddhists’ dissatisfaction with British rule. The nationalist movement in Burma was led largely by Buddhist monks and university students. When the British took control over the course of the nineteenth century, they created separate secular and religious spheres, which pushed the *sangha*—the body of senior Buddhist monks who are recognized as spiritual leaders in Theravada Buddhist countries—out of the political and educational sectors. A group of prominent monks—the General Council for Sangha Sammeggi (GCSS)—stepped outside of just the religious realm and began speaking out and challenging colonial authority. Monks in the GCSS began touring the countryside speaking out on these issues in the 1920s. Groups like the GCSS took it upon themselves to “protect villagers from the abuse of tax collectors and provide a link with urban politicians who could articulate village concerns.” These groups also illustrate how the early nationalists worked within the colonial system, trying to change the system from within.21

Burmese nationalism took on a more xenophobic tone in the 1930s. Many Burmans felt they were being pushed aside and denied opportunities because of their nationality. Over the course of British colonization in Burma, many Indians had immigrated into the country, encouraged by the British, who had trained Indians to be effective members of their civil service

21 Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 216.
since the late 18th century. Members of the Indian middle class often became entrenched in the Burmese economy through their labor and money lending. To the Burmese, Indians were a physical embodiment of foreigners displacing the lower and middle class Burmans. There was also a religious component, since Indians tended to be Hindus and Muslims. Nationalists associated Buddhism with Burma, therefore, people of other religions were outsiders. These frustrations would lead to violent confrontations between the two communities during this decade. While Europeans had reserved the highest positions in society for themselves, the fact that Burmans felt Indians had taken most of the midlevel positions was more frustrating to them. They felt that “their economy, education and administration were being dominated by foreigners at all levels.” By the 1930s, Indians had controlled the moneylending sector to such an extent that Burmese moneylenders were unable to finance their own operations. Burmans, therefore, had no choice but to rely on Indians.²²

This resentment against political and financial discrimination coincided with a growing population of educated Burmans. Students and recent graduates began speaking out about their dissatisfaction. In 1930 they formed the Dobama Asiayone (“We Burmans Association”). They demanded more attention for Burmese rights. They also publically rejected their subservient status to the British. It was custom to use the prefix Maung (“younger brother”) or Ko (“older brother”) while the British used Thakin (“master”). But members of the Dobama Asiayone demanded they be referred to as thankin as well.²³ They also used Indo-Burmese riots and violence that occurred over the course of the 1930s to “call attention to the dire social economic

²³ Charney, 41.
conditions that Burmese people regularly faced.”

In 1930, anti-Indian riots broke out among dock laborers in Rangoon. Burmese dock workers believed employers hired Indians over Burmans, which led to violence against Indians. It is estimated that 120 people were killed. In the same year, Burmese prisoners rose up against their guards, most of which were Indian.

Then in 1938, a group of Buddhists, laymen and monks, gathered at the Shwedagon Pagoda—one of the most significant religious edifices in the country—to express their grievances over insults levied against Buddhists in a book by an Indian Muslim. Over the proceeding weeks, Burmese vernacular newspapers spread the word that the national religion of Burma had been insulted and immediate action was required. The newspapers claimed the book “has cruelly degraded our Supreme Being.” Maung Shwe Hpi, the author of the offensive work entitled *Moulvie Yogi Awada*, claimed the Gaudama Buddha was not the *real* Buddha, but rather an outcast Hindu Brahmin.

By the 26th, the Buddhist population in Rangoon, having become thoroughly enraged after reading the insults in newspapers and listening to impassioned speeches, began a processional out of Shwedagon. Upon reaching one of the Indian communities in the city, violence erupted. While the initial violence was dispersed quickly, over the next few days—then months—more episodes of violence appeared and began to spread beyond the city boundaries.

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26 “B3932/38(ii); Burma Riots: Committee of Enquiry; Riot Enquiry Committee Ordinance; Indians in Burma; claims for damage During Riots,” 18 August 1938-3 July 1941, IOR, Burma Office Records 1932-1948, M/3/514, File 316, British Library, United Kingdom.
Nationalists Dr Ba Maw and U Chit Hlaing were also deeply dissatisfied with the political system laid out in the 1935 Act. They argued that, “the heavily weighted minority and special interest bloc of votes which played the role of ‘King Maker’ in the legislature,” effectively voiding Burman votes. Additionally, there were European industrial and commercial interests which the colonial government favored over those of Burmans. They were particularly upset that the new constitution provided “protection and representation of ‘minorities’ [by allocating] 40 seats…to aliens such as Indians; to special interest groups, such as the chambers of commerce, money lenders of Indian nationality, the Chettiers, Indian and non-Indian labour and Anglo-Burmans; and to a native minority people, the Karens.” This left only 92 seats for Burmans, despite the fact that they made up a greater percentage of the population. They believed this left them incapable of having anything passed in their favor.27

Combined with their dislike of “aliens”—who nationalists believed were running the political system and financial sectors—the topic of mixed marriages became a charged subject. Burmese women having relationships with foreign men became an anti-nationalist platform, threatening the future of the Burmese.28 Much like the concerns about racial degeneration among the British, Burmese nationalists became very concerned with Burmese women’s bodies. A woman engaging in a relationship with a foreigner—European or otherwise—were degrading the Burmese race. Mixed-race children also posed a physical reminder of imperialism. The very existence of Anglo-Burmans challenged nationalist notions of a “community of bama people bounded by ‘one blood, one soul.”’29 The Dobama argued that these women “were willing to

29 Ikeya, 141.
sacrifice race and religion for their own selfish desires.”

Their aggressive rhetoric against intermarriage created an environment where Anglo-Burmans would eventually be afraid of their future. Being the products of mixed-race relations, they became physician reminders of the relationships nationalists rallied against. Which made Anglo-Burmans feel they would not be welcome in independent Burma.

**World War II**

World War II and Japanese imperialism also played a major role in changing the future prospects for Anglo-Burmans. During the war, many nationalists in Southeast Asia, including Burma, saw Japan as “an Asian country that could not only adopt the best that Europeans had to offer, but also use Western weaponry with success against the Europeans.”

After allying with the Nazis in Germany and the Fascists in Italy, the Japanese began colonizing surrounding areas for natural resources that would expand their military power. Southeast Asia was particularly enticing for its oil and rubber. With their powerful military, and the fact that the Western imperial powers were preoccupied with the war in Europe, the Japanese were able to quickly conquer Southeast Asia. Within a very short period of time, Europeans and Americans, including officials, businessmen, and missionaries, were either fleeing or in prison camps. The Japanese control of Burma in 1942 damaged Western prestige in the eyes of many Southeast Asians. The Japanese spoke of ‘Asia for Asians!’ But the rhetoric was only used as a way to disguise their true motivations. They did

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30 Tin Tin Htun, 101.

31 Charney, 50.
not intend to oust Europeans to help Southeast Asian nations gain independence, they intended to replace Western colonizers.\textsuperscript{32}

Burmese nationalists believed Japan’s claims that they could help Burma gain independence. General Aung San played a pivotal role in Burma’s fight for independence and is called the father of Burmese nationalism. While there were many other participants in Burma’s fight for independence, Aung San actively recruited nationalists to fight with him for independence. He also helped the Japanese train these recruits. The Japanese officially declared war on the British on December 8\textsuperscript{th}, 1941. The Burmese created the Japanese trained Burma Independence Army (BIA) the same month. By March 1942 they had conquered almost all of central Burma and the BIA had grown to 50,000 soldiers.\textsuperscript{33} Armed Burmese nationalists being trained by the Japanese scared many British supporters, including Anglo-Burmans, causing many to join the military and volunteer forces.\textsuperscript{34}

Japanese occupation forced the British and their sympathizers to evacuate if they could. The conquest was so swift, that authorities had to flee the country without much planning or preparation. The Governor, Dorman-Smith, evacuated Burma and ordered all British government officials to move north, hoping the Japanese would be stopped. When it was clear the Japanese would not be deterred, they evacuated to Simla, India, where they established an exile government. Other Europeans, Anglo-Burmans, and Indians also evacuated. While the government tried to assist those trying to flee, due to the frantic nature of the evacuation, many had to find their own way to India. Those that were unable to make it out of the country often

\textsuperscript{32} Craig A. Lockard, \textit{Southeast Asa in World History} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 144-145.

\textsuperscript{33} Charney, 50.

\textsuperscript{34} Sandra Campagnac-Carney, \textit{Burma – Memories of WWII} (Raleigh: Blue Mist Publications, 2010), 73-74.
found themselves in Japanese run camps. Once the government had evacuated, “social order quickly turned to anarchy.” Disease ran rampant as sanitation departments and hospitals had been shut down. With police gone, crime also rose.\textsuperscript{35}

Evacuation took its toll on Anglo-Burmans. While accurate figures were difficult to obtain, it is estimated that about nine thousand Anglo-Burmans evacuated to India.\textsuperscript{36} The rapid departure left many to find their own ways to India. As the railroads and other travel avenues were continually closed down or even destroyed by the Japanese, they were forced to find other ways to evacuate, while also trying to stay ahead of the Japanese. The more they struggled, the more they felt the British administration had failed them.\textsuperscript{37} Stephen Brookes, one Anglo-Burman who left Burma during the war, recalled the deaths of some of his family members as they tried to leave. He even lost his father to illness at the last stop before the left Burma. Such tragedies forced Brookes to examine his loyalty to the British. By abandoning Anglo-Burmans, the British were cowards; unmanly according to prevailing notions of British masculinity. Brookes, on the other hand, believed that even though “I may have been dressed in rags…one thing I never lost was my pride. My name was Brookes and I was as good as the best.” The “useless British” could not stop him.\textsuperscript{38}

There were also British Burmans left entirely behind during the war. Maureen Baird-Murray was only a child living in a Catholic boarding school when the war broke out. She was

\textsuperscript{35} Aung-Thwin, 232-233.


confused and did not understand why so many of her fellow classmates were taken home during the term. When their church was confiscated by the Japanese and they were forced to relocate to a nearby building, the Burmese servants that worked at the church did not go with them. Due to her status as an Anglo-Burman, she was confused that, “never having to lift a finger or do any kind of manual work before the invasion, once the novelty wore off we found our imposed chores very tedious and performed them with ill grace.” Even the European nuns were forced to do work. And. “with shattering clarity it was brought home to me that the old life was really over. The very first sight of a white person doing a menial dirty job was a severe jolt.”

The war forced Baird-Murray to consider her status and race. She had lived in a privileged place before the invasion. But the Japanese occupation disrupted that status. While still mostly aligning with their British heritage, the War forced some to see Europeans in a different light, which also forced them to grow ever more concerned about who would look after their interests in the future.

After the British had evacuated and the Japanese officially took over, they held a meeting at Maymyo with important Burmese nationalist leaders, including U Baw Ma who would later be named Prime Minister of Burma under Japanese occupation. They promised the Burmese that they could set up their own government under the Japanese in exchange for their participation in the war and the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. Japanese officials also agreed to grant the Burmese independence eventually. Nationalists waited excitedly for the day they would be independent. But as they continued to wait, they realized the Japanese had lied to them. While the Japanese did establish a new constitution with an Adipati (“dictator”), a cabinet of ministers,

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40 Charney, 53.
and a privy council, they remained under close supervision of the Japanese. Life during this time was also very oppressive. Civil liberties were reduced and the freedoms they had been promised by the Japanese were denied. Burmese soldiers were publicly slapped across the face for minor offences. And the Japanese secret police scoured the country for British sympathizers, or anyone opposed to the new government. As the war dragged on, and support for the Japanese began to decline nationally, the Allies began their plans to take Burma back, which included the use of Anglo-Burman troops.

Once it became clear that the Japanese would not fulfil their promises, Aung San and other Burmese nationalists turned against them. In December 1943 they began secretly sending representatives across the front to make contact with the Allied forces in India. This led to an agreement: first, the Allies would train the Burmese; and second, they would include the Burmese in future air drops of supplies. By August 1944, Aung San had formed the Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League (AFPFL) to prepare for the allied invasion. Aung San also ordered the officers of the Burmese National Army (BNA) to stop shaving their heads, a practice required by the Japanese. This served two purposes, first as an act of defiance; and second, it was a way to blend into the crowd when the revolt came. The War quickly turned against Japan in 1944, prompting Aung San to make preparations for the rebellion. On March 24th, 1945 Aung San arranged with the BNA to feign an attack against the Allies. Once they left Rangoon, they vanished and hid in their designated zones throughout the country. On May 27th, they began their campaign against the Japanese. With the help of the BNA, the British took Rangoon on May 3rd.

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41 Charney, 53-54.
42 Charney, 55-56.
43 Charney, 57.
and began talks with Aung San about the future of Burma. Although the Japanese had officially surrendered on September 2nd, because the forces in Burma had been cut off from communication with Japan, they finally surrendered on October 24th. 44

There were many other players involved in ousting the Japanese from Burma, and British reliance on them led to resentment Nationalist resentment after the war. This tension eventually led to violence between the Burmans and ethnic minorities, violence that caused great concern for the Anglo-Burman community. In particular, the British and Americans relied heavily on the ethnic minorities along the borders of the country. For instance, Hill tribes in the Karen State helped the British find the Japanese hiding in these areas. 45 Even though the Karen had been helping the British before the AFPFL was formed, the BNI remained predominantly ethnically Burman. The Burmans continued to resent the perceived special treatment the Karen and other ethnic minorities had received during colonization. Even during Japanese occupation, violence broke out between Burmans and the Karen from the colonial army that had not evacuated Burma. These ethnic tensions remained after the British took back the country, and they led to further violence after independence. While the violence was not explicitly directed at the Anglo-Burman population, it did cause the Community to fear for their safety. 46

As will be discussed below, Anglo-Burmans also contributed to the war effort. According to members of the Community, they stayed until the last, to help the British with the evacuation. Anglo-Burmans such as Charles Haswell Campagnac and G.P. Kirkham argued that the only ones who maintained their posts during the evacuation were the Anglo-Burmans. They kept the

44 Charney, 57.

45 Lockard, 145.

46 Charney, 55.
railway running until the Japanese arrived so as many people as possible could leave. They also fought with the British in the army. Male members of the Community were not the only ones to stand up with the British, Anglo-Burman women also worked as nurses. According to these figures, the Anglo-Burmese clearly aligned themselves with British sympathies, an alignment that was consistently tested during this time. Those that did not help in the war effort, on the other hand, were left scrambling to get out of the country. Some believed they had been abandoned and mistreated by the British. Anglo-Burmans were treated as lesser than Europeans in the evacuation. And many suffered horrible tragedies and even death on the way to India.

**The Road to the Simla Conference: 1942 – 1944**

By 1939, the British government had decided to give Burma Dominion status in the British Empire, but the date for implementation had not been determined. However, Japanese occupation and the subsequent evacuation made the government reevaluate their plan. Realizing that it would take time rebuild Burma once they were able to reconquer it, they wanted to slow down the transfer of power. In 1942, the British Burma government in exile began trying to rework the plan to turn Burma into a Dominion. Anglo-Burmans, at the time scattered throughout India, became concerned that their interests would not be represented in this plan because they were a minority group. All that had transpired in the 1930s and early 1940s left them nervous about who would look after their interests in a new government. Many began

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47 Campagnac, 275.

48 Brookes, 213.

sending letters to the British government in order to guarantee their security.\textsuperscript{50} In particular, they aimed to secure government funding for English language schools to ensure that their children could still be educated as they had been.\textsuperscript{51} At this time, the various committees discussing the future of the new constitution in Burma considered unifying the education system so it could be paid for entirely by the government. Under this scheme, however, all schools would be taught in Burmese, rather than English. But as Charles Haswell Campagnac, the mayor of Rangoon in 1927 as well as a member of the Burma Senate and representative for the refugees in Bangalore, explained in 1942, it was “of the utmost value that the young of the Community should be cradled in schools with a British atmosphere and with a correct conception of their obligations to the Empire.”\textsuperscript{52} This community linked themselves closely with the British. Children had to be taught that they were members and participants in the British Empire. The requests for grants-in-aid to missionary schools were generated by community fears that their children would be unable to continue their education in a classroom. The fact that some did not consider the possibility that future generations of children might be able to one day attend vernacular schools suggests that some Anglo-Burmans would not integrate into Burmese culture. Or, at least they did not want the British government, from whom they were seeking assistance, to think about this future possibility.

Other safeguards that Anglo-Burmans requested included guarantees of employment in the government agencies in which they had traditionally worked: the civil, judicial, telegraph,

\textsuperscript{50} These letters were only referenced by Campagnac; they were not present in the archives.

\textsuperscript{51} G.P. Kirkham, H.E. the Governor of Burma’s War Relief Fund Secretary, “Memorandum on the Anglo-Burman Case,” at Governor of Burma’s Camp India, Simla, 4 December 1942, IOR, Burma Office Records, M/4/1410, British Library, United Kingdom.

\textsuperscript{52} C.H. Campagnac, “Memorial by the Anglo-Burman Refugees residing at Bangalore” to L.S. Amery Secretary of State for India and Burma, 12 October 1943, IOR, Burma Office Records, M/4/1410, British Library, United Kingdom.
police, and customs services. Their employment was dependent on the state, and they were concerned an independent Burma would threaten that. Community concerns about their security in a country that was being controlled more and more by the Burmese began as far back as the 1920s, when discussions of separating Burma from India forced Anglo-Burmans to consider their place for the first time. Their concerns seemed to be grounded in statements from Burmese Nationalists: “All things being equal preference will be given to Burmans” in government service. This contradicted the assurances made in 1933 by Burmese leaders that the Anglo-Burman community would be treated as equals. Therefore, many British Burmans were still fearful about their futures and wanted to make sure the British secured their futures. Some were concerned that the independent government would be “Burmanized”, therefore leaving Eurasians without employment. According to the Anglo-Burmans in Bangalore—as represented by Campagnac—the Burmese were unreliable and nationalizing against anyone that was not Buddhist.

Burmese nationalist violence in the 1930s also left the Community concerned about the future when Burma was granted Dominion status. As mentioned earlier, anti-Indian violence occurred throughout the country. Burmese Buddhist Nationalists accused Muslim Indians of disrespecting the Buddhist religion. Due to the tensions between these populations mentioned above, the perceived insults to their religion caused nationalists to act violently. These altercations against Muslims also made British Burmans nervous. According to the Anglo-Burman community, the “Zerabedis,” a population that was partially Burmese and partially Indian, were Burman in every respect except their religion. And when one member of the


54 “Memorial by the Anglo-Burman Refugees residing at Bangalore,” 12 October 1943.
Zerabedis community published a pamphlet that some Burmese nationalists felt was defamatory to their religion, the violent retribution was terrifying. The Anglo-Burmans in Bangalore pointed out that “if this sort of thing can happen to a people who were so closely akin to the Burmans… what security can Anglo-Burmans a divergent people, hope for in a Constitution without safeguards?”

While this claim was made clearly to instill concern for the physical safety of this minority population, Campagnac added that:

> Infliction of personal injury is only one manifestation of this antipathy and a transient phase of that manifestation. Political and racial discriminations, because of their subtlety and the deep incision they can cause in the economic life and liberties of a minority are far more dreaded.

Fearing discrimination as much as violence, Campagnac implored the British to create protections that insured they would not be removed from employment because they behaved more British than Burmese. Additionally, this group in Bangalore believed they were not being fairly compensated for the losses incurred during the evacuation. Therefore, they pleaded with the British to take immediate action regarding the current financial assistance for evacuated Eurasians, as well as compensation for what they lost in Burma. Lastly, they wanted to be represented in the government reconstruction committees.

In making such requests, Anglo-Burmans continually played up their British heritage in the hopes that it would create a sense of kinship. This, they hoped, would make the government more inclined to grant their requests. In fact, some stated outright that it was the responsibility of the British to look after Anglo-Burmans because this community was “brought into being as part

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55 “Memorial by the Anglo-Burman Refugees residing at Bangalore,” 12 October 1943.
56 “Memorial by the Anglo-Burman Refugees residing at Bangalore,” 12 October 1943.
57 “Memorial by the Anglo-Burman Refugees residing at Bangalore,” 12 October 1943.
Many writers attributed the existence of the Anglo-Burman community to British policies of intermarriage in the early days of colonization. For instance, G.P. Kirkham, the Secretary for the Governor of Burma’s War Relief Fund as well as the for the Anglo-Burman Community in India and the President-in-Chief of the Anglo-Burman Community in India, prepared a Memorandum on the Anglo-Burman Case on December 4th, 1942. In it, he defined some general features of this population. He argued that they were “entirely Christian and their customs, ideals and mode of living are British; and because of their paternity and systems of education, they are instinctively British in their approach to the wider interests outside their own community.”

Establishing that Anglo-Burmans were Christians and raised to be British, Kirkham attempted to elicit a sense of ancestral ties in order to entice the colonial government to grant him, and the population of British Burmans he spoke for, certain constitutional safeguards. Emphasizing that these Eurasians were British not only among themselves, but in how they approached the world outside of their community also demonstrates that he wanted the readers of the memorandum to believe that British Burmans were removed and culturally separate from the Burman populations that they lived among.

The loyalty and heroic actions of the Anglo-Burman community during World War II became a popular trope among those attempting to elicit particular responses from the British government in the aftermath of the evacuation. Kirkham’s memorandum stressed their loyalty and devotion to the British during the war. In a section he entitled “Anglo-Burmans an Imperial

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58 “Memorial by the Anglo-Burman Refugees residing at Bangalore,” 12 October 1943. While the specific policy referenced here is not explained, the British in the 19th century encouraged European men to integrate into the local communities. This often resulted in temporary marriages and the production of mixed-race children.


60 “Memorandum on the Anglo-Burman Case,” 4 December 1942.
Asset,” he colorfully claimed that: “When the administration and everything was visibly tottering and crumbling in Burma under the impact of invasion, Anglo-Burmans clung with an almost pathetic faith to their British connections.”\(^{61}\) After having established the strong connection between Anglo-Burmans and the British, Kirkham then moved on to eliciting guilt for not adequately supporting a community with a familial connection to their own. To bring the discussion back to his request for assistance, he declared that Anglo-Burman “loyalty and trust in Britain in the darkest hour of her adversity in Burma does indicated [sic.] that the community has risen from the British foundations of birth, education and character.” Therefore, it was the responsibility of the government to secure English education as well as employment for Anglo-Burmans under the new Burma government.\(^{62}\)

The British Burman refugees in Bangalore also used this tactic in his pleas for assistance for the refugees. Campagnac argued that almost every “able-bodied Anglo-Burman” fought for the British during the war.\(^{63}\) Clearly, he believed that, by fighting in such large numbers—for the size of their population at least—Anglo-Burmans were entitled to assistance from those they fought for. Campagnac claimed, therefore, to be submitting this memorial “in the belief that a great country like Great Britain [would] not fail in its obligations to a community which, as history shows…has always shared in its days of adversity but only shared the crumbs under the table in its days of prosperity.”\(^{64}\) Again, Campagnac attempted to deride the British for not properly supporting their kin, thereby making them feel guilty enough to provide assistance.

\(^{61}\) “Memorandum on the Anglo-Burman Case,” 4 December 1942.

\(^{62}\) “Memorandum on the Anglo-Burman Case,” 4 December 1942.

\(^{63}\) “Memorial by the Anglo-Burman Refugees residing at Bangalore,” 12 October 1943.

\(^{64}\) “Memorial by the Anglo-Burman Refugees residing at Bangalore,” 12 October 1943.
While these representatives emphasized British paternity, they also felt it was crucial to stress the hardships they faced due to their loyalty and European heritage. Anglo-Burman members of the Government of Burma Evacuee Welfare and Rehabilitation Department in Simla focused on the hardships the Community faced under Japanese Occupation, because they were classified as European. They were interned with Europeans, physically assaulted, and left in fear of their lives every day. Those that managed to escape, according to these Anglo-Burman members, had to walk to India, without any food and only they clothing they had on their backs. They even went so far as to claim that many of them were shoeless on this trek, having lost them in the mud of the jungles during the monsoons. They claimed that those “left behind in Burma and who [had] to go through these grave hardships because of their British paternity, their past loyalty and their present feelings, deserve special consideration of release from captivity.”

According to these members, this treatment was due to of their mixed heritage and loyalty to the British. They fervently claimed that, “No other community is being ill-treated in the same way by the Japanese in Burma.”

Anglo-Burmans here were conflicted. They did not simply fall into one category. On the one hand, they claimed it was their European heritage and loyalty to the British that caused the Japanese to mistreat them as they did. But on the other hand, they claimed that they were the only group being mistreated in this way, even though they acknowledged that Europeans were interned with them. They were connected with the British but set apart from them and treated worse. But these pleas were designed to convince British officials to provide assistance to Anglo-Burmans moving back to, or for those who remained in, Burma. What is important to note

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is that this request for assistance went beyond just transportation and food. They argued that, “Conditions in Burma are going to be abnormal for some considerable time after its re-conquest. Food, medical attention and education will hardly be available up to the standard needed by the Community.”

English language education was so fundamental to their identity, that it was considered one of the necessities for living in Burma. It is important to note here, however, that they had begun to establish the importance of English language education if they were to remain in Burma. English language helped make a place a “home” for them, even if that language was being taught in a country where the majority language was Burmese.

**Conclusion**

The Government of India Act of 1935 forced various players to think about how Anglo-Burmans did or did not fit into various imaginings of Burmese futures. Discussions of the importance of domicile or blood in mixed-race identities laid the ground work for future discussions after World War II. The rise of Burmese nationalism also sparked concerns among the Anglo-Burman community that would carry over after World War II and independence. The aggressive language and actions used by nationalists in the 1930s against people they saw as foreigners and threats to the Burmese race concerned Anglo-Burmans. These fears led many to seek assistance from the British after Burma was no longer a part of the empire.

The outbreak of World War II also created the seeds for Anglo-Burmans’ pleas for assistance from the British after independence. With the outbreak of war, and Nationalists’ insistence upon independence after ousting the Japanese, Anglo-Burmans feared for their future. They consistently reached out to the British in India during the exile seeking assistance. In these

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66 Government of Burma Evacuee Welfare and Rehabilitation Department to T.L. Hughes, 13 October 1944.
pleas, it was clear they felt an affinity to the British based on shared cultural backgrounds. They stressed the importance of maintaining English-language schools and British imperial connections. Anglo-Burman leaders at the Simla conference—to be discussed in the next chapter—would try to alter this narrative. It became clear that the Burmans would be in control of the country soon, and some members of the Anglo-Burman community determined they needed to make a drastic change in how they aligned themselves if they wanted to secure their future in independent Burma. Therefore, in 1944, the Community determined they would align themselves with their Asian heritage rather than their European side—as they had done in the past. They attempted to redefine what it meant to be Anglo-Burman. Rather than stressing their European modes of life, and the cultural similarities to the British, they wanted to focus on Burma as their Motherland.
CHAPTER 3

Turning Point? 1944-1948

After the continued pressure from Campagnac and Kirkham and those they represented, the Government of Burma in exile decided to include the Community in the reconstruction discussions. They agreed to hold a special conference for Anglo-Burmans from January 27th to February 4th, 1944, officially designated “The Anglo-Burman Conference.”¹ Its purpose was to “obtain the advice of members of the Anglo-Burman Community…in India on questions which will effect the position of the Community in Burma after is [sic.] reoccupation.”² The conference was divided into two segments and comprised of twelve Anglo-Burmans. Campagnac and Kirkham were included, as well as H McG. Elliot—the chairman of the first part of conference—R.J. Mitchell of the Burma Frontier Service, J. Barrington of the Indian Civil Service (ICS), K.W. Foster of the Burma Civil Service, E.A. Franklin of the ICS, J.F. Blake, W.A. Gibson, J.A.L. Wiseman, Dr. Kohn, and Mrs. J.M. Russell.³ Also in attendance was the Governor of Burma Sir Reginald Dorman Smith, U Tin Tut, a Burmese Indian Civil Servant who sat as the Reconstruction Advisor for the Governor, Sir Htoon Aung Gyaw—chairman of the second session—F.B. Arnold of the ICS, and Chief Secretary to the Governor of Burma Professor B.R.


³ Professions not listed, most likely had jobs in the private sector before evacuation. So their current positions were unknown.
Pearn. After a brief introductory meeting with all members, the first session continued as a closed-door meeting for the twelve Anglo-Burmans present while at the second all members were in attendance to discuss the conclusions the Community had come to regarding their future.4

This chapter examines the outcomes of this conference. At Simla, those in attendance established new rhetoric for their identities. While this shift in rhetoric was meant to be a major turning point for British Burmans, it was a shift that did not take hold outside of the conference. Anglo-Burmans struggled to redefine themselves. Many believed their future in Burma without the British was in danger. After the British reoccupied Burma, Burmese nationalism and independence proved to Anglo-Burmans that they would not be able to live as they were raised without British Rule. British Burmans could not identify as either British or Burmese. As the Simla conference demonstrated, they had ties to Burma. But they identified with the British as well, and they were afraid for their future in independent Burma. It was here that British Burmans stressed their allegiance to the British, as well as the ways in which the British had failed them, to argue the need to emigrate from Burma. They recognized it was more advantageous for them to emphasize their ties to the British rather than stressing their connections to the Burmese—as the members at Simla initially wanted. My examination of the period also illustrates the complexity of how Britons viewed the Community. As Anglo-Burmans reexamined their future and what they wanted it to be, British officials were uncertain of the best way to help the Community. Some believed the British Government were not obligated to help Anglo-Burmans once Burma became independent. But there were others that sympathized with the plight of British Burmans and recognized that this population of mixed-race people had ties

to the British. These officials argued that they had an obligation to help this struggling community.

The end of World War II and the growth of nationalist movements around the world also played critical roles for the future of Burma and the Anglo-Burmans place therein. Japanese forces in Asia put the British in a precarious position. The weakened image of the British in Asia bolstered Burmese nationalist groups’ confidence. Although nationalists eventually recognized the Japanese were colonizers and not liberators, they did not want to be a British colony again once they were able to oust the Japanese. Additionally, British politics, and the economic and social consequences of World War II, caused many Britons to focus on domestic concerns rather than the Empire, which gave Burmese nationalists more courage to fight for independence. Indian nationalism in the 1940s was particularly influential – in both Britain and Burma. Jailing nationalist leaders, however, did not give the British the desired results. Violence and nationalist sentiments only continued to grow. Pressure from Indian nationalist groups for independence shaped how the British acted toward the Burmese, and Anglo-Burmans were concerned they would be left behind and forgotten. Initially, while making plans for the future in Simla in the early 1940s, the British intended to recolonize Burma and reestablish the government elected in 1937. However, it slowly became clear, as it did with India, that re-establishing the prewar constitution was not an option. While the British insisted on recolonizing for a short time period to help the Burmese establish an independent government, nationalists continued to insist on a faster turn over, pushing the British out by 1948.5 Within this context, Anglo-Burmans continually reexamined their future and where they belonged.

The Simla Conference and Immediate Aftermath

By January 1944, the twelve Anglo-Burmans attending the conference in Simla had repositioned the ways they crafted their allegiances. The first three days of the conference, January 28th, 29th, and 31st, was a closed-door session for only the Anglo-Burmans. While the official report of the conference does not detail what was discussed in this session, it did lay out the conclusions these members came to. Campagnac did, however, detail the events of the second session in his report on the conference. In this account, he made a point to mention that the members at the conference, “were not present as representatives of the community and that the decisions arrived at by them [were] in no way binding on the community, but [were] only recommendations to the community.” He then detailed the opening meeting of the conference, which included all attendants at noon on January 28th. T.L Hughes—one of the Governor’s secretary read a welcome statement from the Governor, followed by a statement from U Tin Tut. The latter stressed that Anglo-Burmans would be welcome in the new Burma, so long as they were willing to abandon their claims to special privileges. He asked the Community to put their trust in the Burmese people. If they were capable of doing this, Tin Tut claimed that the Burmese people would welcome Anglo-Burmans and would “respond in a like spirit of generosity and trust.”

After this opening session, the Anglo-Burman attendants held their closed-door meetings. When the rest of the conference reconvened with all attendants, the Anglo-Burman members present were ready to give a statement advising how the Community should move forward in Burma, so long as certain conditions were met. But before they delivered their statement, they

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6 Campagnac’s own memoir does not mention what was discussed at this meeting.
7 Dorman-Smith was unable to attend the first day of the conference.
read a letter from a “European gentleman”—Major C.M. Enriquez—addressed to the President of the Anglo-Burman members of the conference.\textsuperscript{9} The letter stated that “the European British Community in Burma would be glad to include Anglo-Burmans in their ranks and to secure for them the privilege of British Nationality and status in society and in the services.” However, all members of the conference acknowledged that this letter had no official government backing, therefore Elliot noted that, unless there was official backing from the British Government, Anglo-Burmans could not rely on Enriquez’s statements.

Perhaps it was the fact that the British Government had not made an official statement that Anglo-Burmans would be welcome in Britain, but after this letter, Campagnac recited a statement, authorized by himself and the other 11 Anglo-Burmans in attendance:

We have always regarded ourselves as a people of Burma and we wish to continue as such. To prove our sincerity, we have agreed to recommend to Anglo-Burmans that they should abandon all claims to special privileges, and if the confidence expressed by U Tin Tut that Burmans will respond in like spirit of generosity and trust is implemented on our return to Burma, we see no reason to change our identity as Anglo-Burmans.

This declaration marked a drastic change from how the community had previously expressed their place in Burma. Much like the Anglo-Indians in India, British Burmans wanted to do whatever they could to secure their future. However, in India, they did not make a resolution as a community. The choice to dismiss their European heritage was a personal one. Unlike with the Anglo-Burman community, Anglo-Indians did not come to a resolution to align themselves with Indians. While there were a number that left India, many stayed and stressed their Indian heritage in order to defend themselves against Indian disdain for the Eurasian population.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{9} No name for this President was given. It seems most likely they meant the Chairman Elliot. Letter not printed.

Elliot then stood up to express what the Anglo-Burman participants had agreed to over the last three days. He explained that British Burmans were anxious to return to their “homeland”—Burma. They wanted to help in rebuilding Burma and doing what they could to ensure its future success. And while they were prepared to abandon their claims to special privileges—in particular, their reserved seats in Parliament and their privileges to government service jobs—they hoped that the Burmans would work to preserve certain matters which the Anglo-Burman community considered important to their future success in Burma. Namely, their religion, their native language of English, and their “customs and habits.” He claimed that, the members of the Community attending the conference came to such a drastic decision based on the recent history of their relationship with the British government and Burmans. With the Government of Burma Act of 1935, they were guaranteed some protections. The Governor of Burma was charged with making sure the minority populations in Burma had access to government appointments for which they were qualified. The Governor was supposed to maintain the Community’s connection to work in the Customs, Postal, and Telegraph services. But they felt that these protections were only on paper. Since the 1935 Act, Elliot argued that Anglo-Burman participation in these services was declining. At the same time, Burmans viewed these protections as prejudice against them, and the resented minorities for it, creating a rift between Anglo-Burmans and Burmans. The twelve Anglo-Burmans present at the conference believed “in the New Burma the community would be in a much stronger position if it threw itself on the generosity of Burmans rather than rely upon the paper safeguards which had been provided for them in the past.”

The next two meetings of the conference focused on discussing ways to secure Anglo-Burman’s future in the country. First, they focused on education and the Community’s access to English language instruction. British Burmans, Britons, and Burmans in attendance agreed it would be best if they had access to English language education in primary and secondary school. These schools would need to be funded by special scholarships and grants in aide. These schools would not be for Anglo-Burmans and Europeans alone, however, Burmese children would be included as well. They also discussed what steps should be taken once Burma was re-occupied by the British. The Community requested that search parties be established to reunite separated families. They also asked for systems to be established to provide financial aid for British Burmans in need. In a similar vein, they hoped the British and Burmese would help Anglo-Burmans get back into their former jobs. For those that felt it best to leave government service, they asked the British to help set up a conference with British businesses in Burma to open up new avenues of employment for the Community. Once colonial ties disappeared, Anglo-Burmans who had been disproportionately part of the colonial state, would find themselves without work and out of place in an independent state. Therefore, they sought other avenues for employment while also positioning themselves as moving away from special privileges to preserve their relationships with the Burmese. The other members of the conference agreed to make these recommendations to the Reconstruction Department and stressed that the Anglo-Burman community would have more opportunities under the Burmese Government.


Following the final Conference meeting, a dinner was held for all participants. At it, a number of the members made speeches to express their sentiments of the conference. Campagnac used a letter from his son, a soldier in the military, who was on his way to expel the Japanese from Burma after the government had evacuated. In that letter, Campagnac read that, “tears came into his eyes when he saw how some of our Anglo-Burman lads when they first set foot on Burma soil got down on their knees and kissed the earth while others knelt in prayer.”

While he still made links to their English heritage through the mention of Christian prayer, this comment also alludes to the fact that Anglo-Burmans considered Burma their homeland, thereby stressing their Burmese connections. Others also emphasized the importance of Burma as the place of their birth. Elliot noted that the British Burmans “who have come across [from Burma into India] and are serving in the armed forces are looking forward with eagerness to the day when they and their comrades-in-arms will begin the liberation of their beloved country.”

Immediately after the conference dispersed, the Anglo-Burmans participants went about disseminating the recommendations they had come to. While the those in Simla never stressed their Burmese connections in the same way as they had their European heritage, they still focused on their Burmese lineage in order to garner a sense of security regarding their place in the new Burma. For instance, Dorman-Smith, after the conference, was under the impression that “The younger generation [of Anglo-Burmans] argue that as Burmans, their prospects will be bright; as a minority entitled to special safeguards there will always be friction.”

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16 Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, manuscript letter to Early Winterton M.P., 26 February 1944. IOR, Burma Office Records 1932-1948, M/4/1410, British Library, United Kingdom.
Anglo-Irish in the early 20th century who strategically ignored their English heritage to feel secure among Irish nationalists, Anglo-Burmans repackaged their identities for political reasons.17 They were looking ahead and choosing the path they thought would yield the best results.

In fact, the Anglo-Burmans in Simla emphasized that in looking towards the future, they believed accepting their Burmese heritage over their British side would be best not just for their community, but for Burma, their motherland. Kirkham, in a letter attempting to clarify the resolutions from the Simla conference, acknowledged that relations between Anglo-Burmans and the Burmese had not always been amicable. He explained that he “personally, was not satisfied with the outlook and attitude of [his] Burmese neighbours towards Anglo-Burmans. Most of us felt we were not receiving a square deal from the Burmans and we naturally felt raw on the subject.” He urged, however, that if Eurasians and the Burmese were to live amicably in the new country they were trying to build, “It seemed necessary to be Burmese, not only in definition but in spirit.”18 He also advocated that Anglo-Burmans should let go of any negative history between them and the Burmese because “The point is not what we have been through but how we use our experience. Bitterness is an admission of defeat.”19 Anglo-Burman identity was no longer just about claiming the heritage of the colonizer in order to gain security; it was about bettering the country they called home. Forgetting the past and claiming their Burmese heritage would not only benefit their community, but would also be a way to give their “best to Burma” by having

18 G.P. Kirkham, Esq., manuscript letter to Presidents of the Five Anglo-Burman bodies in India, 27 June 1944. IOR, Burma Office Records 1932-1948, M/4/1410, British Library, United Kingdom.
19 G.P. Kirkham to Presidents of the Five Anglo-Burman bodies in India, 27 June 1944.
“ready for the peace table an answer for every afflicted minority in this war-torn world.”

Kirkham believed they could set an example for the other ethnic minorities in Burma on how to adapt and adjust to the new political situation.

Another layer of the recommendations from the Anglo-Burmans at the conference involved refashioning some of the claims they had used previously when pleading for assistance from the British. The community again emphasized their heroism in battle, but rather than making such claims in order to show their loyalty to the colonial government, they stressed instead their valiant efforts to defend Burma, their home. In his speech to the Simla conference, Campagnac exclaimed: “Let it never be forgotten that these Anglo-Burman lads voluntarily fought and laid down their lives to help in the reconquest [sic.] of Burma.”

While before Campagnac had claimed that British Burmans fought in the war for their unfaltering loyalty to the British, here it was an attempt to make clear the community was loyal to the Burmese. They chose to fight and die for their mother country.

These different tactical emphases, however, were complex and fluid. Individual British Burmans continued to struggle defining what it meant to be Anglo-Burman. It was not possible to simply be “Burmese” or “British” and deciding how to incorporate both aspects meant something different to most members of the community. While immediately after the Simla Conference the members in attendance began to stress the Burmese sides, some also continued to include aspects of Britishness in their discussions about where they would belong in a new Burma. However, they claimed that these strong declarations in favor of their British heritage were made as a way of imploring the British, as well as other Anglo-Burmans, to respect the resolution from the Simla conference. While they wanted British assistance, they did not want to

20 G.P. Kirkham to Presidents of the Five Anglo-Burman bodies in India, 27 June 1944.

21 “Towards a Greater Burma,” 7 February 1944.
alienate themselves from their Burmese associates as well. Many of the reasons members of the community stressed their connections to the British were connected to claims of economic hardship. Similar to the tactics used prior to the Simla conference, the emphasis on their European heritage was a way to persuade the British into providing assistance to the British Burman community. The refugees at Bangalore after the Simla conference explained the history of their dedication to British interests. In a memorial to the British Government, the group of Anglo-Burman refugees in Bangalore, once again stressed how “The forefathers of this Community were the pioneers in Burma.” These authors proceeded to list the various civil service occupations Anglo-Burmans had worked from the beginning of British colonization.22 The claim that they were the pioneers of British Burma was a key part of their effort to persuade British officials to support them. It is clear that, while this did not represent a rejection of the recommendations to align themselves with the Burmese government as well as their Asian ancestry, these refugees were still concerned that they would not be protected once the British left. Their proclamations, therefore, reveal that they needed to position their themselves based on context and audience so as to best gain the assistance they felt they deserved.

To convince the British government into providing protections for the Anglo-Burman community while they also finalized the arrangements for Burma’s independence, members of the community emphasized specific events or forms of participation in fighting for Burma. Much as they had claimed prior to the Simla conference, many stated that every able-bodied Anglo-Burman—men as well as women—had participated in the war effort. They went on to further emphasize the heroism of Anglo-Burmans. The memorial from Bangalore imploring Great Britain for assistance stressed how, against the Japanese, Anglo-Burmans “fought with such

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gallantry at the battles Martaban and Sittang that the men of the King’s Own Yorkshire Light Infantry dubbed them ‘The Fighting Fifth.’”\(^{23}\) The same memorial also emphasized how a regiment, consisting mainly of Anglo-Burmans, “brought down an enemy plane with their first shot,” and with only four guns.\(^{24}\) These assertions of heroism illustrate just one of the ways Anglo-Burmans emphasized their Britishness. Additionally, claims of gallantry also related to British notions of masculinity. They set themselves apart from Burmans and Indians by illustrating their exceptional bravery, a characteristic that many associated with British masculinity.\(^ {25}\)

In further support of Anglo-Burman exceptionalism, Campagnac also emphasized that they stayed the longest in Burma fighting the Japanese during the war. He claimed, “Nearly all the Indian and Burma employees of the railways had deserted but the Anglo-Burmans kept the trains running up to the last.”\(^ {26}\) While he did not provide any figures to support such a claim, the assertion served to affiliate the Anglo-Burmese with Europeans. He was demonstrating how much like the British they were. Unlike Burmans, who British Burmans argued did not measure up to British masculine ideals, Anglo-Burmans demonstrated their bravery by risking their lives to defend British Burma. Such claims of bravery and gallantry represented similarities to British constructions of the ideal masculinity. By demonstrating their similarities to the British, and differences from the Burmans, they made explicit links to kinship with the British rather than the Burmese. While those that aligned themselves with Eurasian associations were not rejecting the

\(^{23}\) Extract from a Memorial submitted by Anglo-Burman Refugees in Bangalore in 1945, April 1945.

\(^{24}\) Extract from a Memorial submitted by Anglo-Burman Refugees in Bangalore in 1945, April 1945.


agreements from the Simla conference, making such claims were an attempt to insure protections while the colonial government worked to give the colony its independence. The Anglo-Burmans at Bangalore felt in-between British and Burmese. These refugees were not refuting the resolutions of the Simla conference. But their emphasis on Anglo-Burman exceptionalism served to demonstrate they were better than the Burmese.

Campagnac also expressed the Anglo-Burman’s feeling of betrayal was due to their racial difference. A few felt forsaken; the government to which they claimed a biological connection was not supporting them. In Campagnac’s memorial published after the Simla conference, he asked for assistance while complained that after the “Many deeds of heroism…performed in Burma by Anglo-Burmans in the fighting…it is amazing that there has been no recognition of these acts of bravery and no awards made to any of them.”27 Campagnac also believed the betrayal the community was felt due to British actions, which also meant that Anglo-Burmans must be “regarded as hostages…and there is a moral obligation on the part of those who give and those who receive hostages to ensure their safety and well being.”28 While they intended to stay in Burma after independence, they struggled to relinquish the feeling that they were above the Burmese and close to the British, therefore deserving of preferential treatment. The language presented in this protestation also illustrates another way Anglo-Burmans attempted to sway the British to assist them. Terms such as “heroism” and “bravery,” once again, were attempts to associate Anglo-Burmans with British notions of masculinity, thereby stressing their kinship with the British. By being brave and heroic, there were antithetical to Burmans, who the British viewed as “lazy” and “indolent.” Additionally, portraying their outrage that the British clearly

27 Extract from a Memorial submitted by Anglo-Burman Refugees in Bangalore in 1945, April 1945.

did not appreciate their kin as much as Anglo-Burmans believed they should be seen as an attempt to shame the government into providing the assistance Anglo-Burmans desired.

Besides emphasizing their involvement in WWII many Anglo-Burmans stressed their cultural similarities with the British for the same purpose. Much of the rhetoric was exaggerated in order to persuade the British into providing the specific assistance they felt they were due. Although he did not explicitly argue for a cultural affinity, Campagnac also felt Anglo-Burmans were linked by British cultural habits. In discussing the difficulties they suffered while evacuating Rangoon during the war, he argued that leaving their homes proved a major obstacle. As he put it, “It was a great wrench for these people to leave their homes. Their standard of living had been high. Almost all of them had resided in well-furnished flats or houses in which there were pianos, radio sets and gramophones. Many of them owned motor-cars.”

The apartments and houses that Campagnac described seemed to be furnished in a “Western” style and influenced by Europeans. Other examinations of the Eurasian experience in the British Empire has stressed the significance that home décor could play in their identity negotiations. For example, among Anglo-Indians during the 1940s, nationalists argued that those in the community that kept their households in Western styles rather than Indian were claiming European rather than Indian identities.

In short, it was more than simply Anglo-Burman rhetoric that linked them to British culture; they also used the material organization of their households to support these claims. Similar to the way many linked their masculinity to British constructions, their connections to the British standard of living as well as the way they kept their houses connected Anglo-Burmans to the British beyond merely connections of blood.

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Just as before the Simla conference, the Anglo-Burman use of the English language and Christianity played a crucial factor in efforts to emphasize their Britishness over Asianness. In claiming their right to aid from the British, the authors of the Memorial in 1945 argued that if the United States and Great Britain could promise to help colonized people to gain independence, “surely they will see to it that a small community of their own kith and kin, speaking their own language and holding the same tenets of religious belief, a community which has taken its full share in withstanding the aggressors, and suffered as few other communities have” deserved assistance.31 Campagnac also argued that Eurasians from Burma “have every reason to believe that His Majesty’s Government will not be less generous to [them] than the Burmans have promised to be. In honour and in justice His Majesty’s Government cannot divest itself of its responsibility to a community it was responsible for bringing into being.”32 The kinship between the British and Eurasians meant the Government had a responsibility towards Anglo-Burmans. And they could not abandon their responsibility to a population so closely related to their own.

The 1945 memorial from the Banglalore refugees also stressed the significance of understanding Anglo-Burman religious and educational backgrounds as comparable to those of the British. These authors believed understanding these aspects of Anglo-Burman identities, the vestiges of European traditions, made an important argument for the British government providing assistance to British Burmans. While some of the claims may have been exaggerated for effect, they argued that “the community is an entirely Christian community and that its children were educated in Christian schools.” Furthermore, they claimed that Anglo-Burmans were “one hundred per cent literate in English.”33 Making such ardent claims illustrates, not only

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31 Extract from a Memorial submitted by Anglo-Burman Refugees in Bangalore in 1945, April 1945.


33 Extract from a Memorial submitted by Anglo-Burman Refugees in Bangalore in 1945, April 1945.
how much Anglo-Burmans continued to associate with their European heritage after the Simla conference, but also the extent to which they wanted British assistance. And although the Burmese and British attendance at the Anglo-Burman conference agreed to recommend the continued use of English in schools, those in Bangalore clearly feared the new Government would not agree to do so.

While Campagnac and the refugees at Bangalore continued to request assistance from the British while claiming to support the Simla Resolutions, Kirkham felt it important for the future of the Community to refute their claims all the while using his affinity with the British to do it. In his response to Campagnac’s memorial after the conference, Kirkham claimed that Anglo-Burmans “wish to preserve [their] communal identity, [their] British heritage and [their] Western culture.” But he made this claim to demonstrate that the ones made in Campagnac’s memorial were trivial. While Campagnac continued his requests for financial assistance and medals for Anglo-Burmans, Kirkham claimed “There are many important underlying principals in [Anglo-Burman’s British heritage], as against which medals, kit compensation and the transitory features of evacuee relief will, I trust, be relegated to their proper place.”

For Kirkham, the promise that Anglo-Burmans would not seek special privileges was more important for the future of the community than requesting assistance from the colonial government. Kirkham also eloquently stated to the other members of the community, in order to persuade them to abide by the resolutions of the conference, “Anglo-Burmans wish to serve Burma, ‘unselfishly and well’ in the same way as an Englishmen would desire to serve England.”

Because associating their identity with the British is something British Burmans would have understood, it seems Kirkham


35 G.P. Kirkham to Presidents of the Five Anglo-Burman bodies in India, 27 June 1944.
utilized this strategy to convince the community to align themselves with their Burmese
countrymen. They could keep the aspects of their British heritage that they admired while they
claimed more of their Asian fit into the new Burma. Kirkham stressed a more future oriented
vision for the Community, while trying to obtain privileges for Anglo-Burmans who were hurt
by their war time experiences.

**Burmese Nationalism and the Road to Independence**

The reoccupation and push towards independence created many situations that left Anglo-
Burmans in fear for their future and uncertain about where they would land. Discussions of
Burmese independence in general exemplified the struggles British Burmans faced trying to find
their place in the new Burma. Before the British could reoccupy in 1943, Admiral Lord Louis
Mountbatten was appointed Allied commander of the South-East Asia Theatre. He became
officially in charge of reoccupying Burma. In order to oust the Japanese, Mountbatten realized he
needed to work with the Burmese, and armed Aung San and his Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom
League (AFPFL). On September 12th, 1945 Mountbatten accepted Japan’s official surrender in
Singapore. In the same month, he invited the AFPFL to meet in order to reach an agreement on
how the New Burma Army should look. They concluded that the Army would be made up of the
former army, including the British, Karen, Kachin, Chin, and Anglo-Burmans. But it would also
incorporate the former Burma Independence Army (BIA), the military unit created by Aung San
and the Japanese to oust the British during the War. While many in London wanted Aung San
arrested for treason, Mountbatten believed it would be best to work with the leader of
nationalism in Burma. And by doing so, he began incorporating the Burmese in its reconstruction.  

Meanwhile, before the British could reoccupy Burma, Dorman-Smith was working in Simla on a plan upon reentry. The conferences and meetings held in Simla while they were exiled helped inform this plan—including the advice provided at the resolution of the Anglo-Burman conference in 1944. While minority communities, including the Anglo-Burmans, contributed to what the future Burma would like, they excluded discussions from nationalists, which would become a point of contention later on. The White Paper, released in 1945, explained that Burma would become an independent government within the British commonwealth. However, it did not provide a concrete date for the transfer of power. Additionally, until they were ready for independence, the governor would appoint an executive council that would run things, while taking into consideration the opinions of the Burmese. Then, once the economy had recovered and law and order had been restored, they would hold elections that would reestablish the government laid out in the Government of India Act of 1935.  

When Dorman-Smith returned to Burma in October of 1945, his attempts to implement the White Paper were met with immediate dissatisfaction from the AFPFL and other Burmese nationalists. His first step was to meet with Aung San and other AFPFL representatives to finalize the details. But Aung San refused to accept the White Paper and demanded that the British establish an executive council with a majority being AFPFL members. Aung San believed the most important thing was to remove the British from power. Handling with how to incorporate ethnic minorities in the new country could be done once the British were out.

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37 *The River of Lost Footsteps*, 241.
Dorman-Smith posed Aung San’s counter to the government in London, and they told him to hold strong and not let Aung San push him into a position of weakness. So Dorman-Smith attempted to move forward with the White Paper without the participation of Burmese nationalists. Nationalists did not react kindly to this. Burmese language newspapers criticized the Governor and other officials for recolonizing Burma. Many Burmans felt the British were trying to come back in and take back power. They also believed British-owned businesses discriminated against the Burmese. Citing the Burma Railways, a state-run company that was run by the British, operated by Anglo-Burmans, and dependent on cheap Indian labor. Nationalists also felt Europeans blatantly demonstrated their distrust of Burmans by hiring Eurasians to fill any open positions. If a Eurasian was unable to take the post, they would hire Karen or Kachins over Burmans. It was becoming more and more clear to minorities, such as the Anglo-Burmans, that they were not a priority to the Burmese nationalists trying to take control of the government. Burmese nationalists came first, everyone else had discriminated against them during colonization. These minorities were increasingly more concerned for their future if the AFPFL managed to oust the British and take full control.

Because they refused to accept his counter to the White Paper plan, Aung San created the People’s Volunteer Organization, a military unit separate from the New Burma Army established by Mountbatten. This new unit caused concern not only for the British, but also for the ethnic minorities depending on the British for protection. Dorman-Smith knew Aung San would not back down, and now he had his own military unit that could be used in an uprising against the British. So he reached out to the government in London, imploring them to negotiate with Aung San. But they refused. Even though the War had drained them of their financial resources, British

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38 *The River of Lost Footsteps*, 244-246.

officials believed if they had to use force against the Burmese, they could rely on the Gurkhas in India, West African troops, and even the loyal Burmese—including Anglo-Burmans—to keep Aung San and Burmese nationalists in line. With the growing animosity and violence occurring in India, they were afraid to see Burma go down a similar road. But Dorman worried if they did not negotiate, Burma could erupt as India did in 1942 after the British arrested Gandhi. So, Dorman-Smith met with Aung San, to plead him to work with the British towards independence. But Aung San again declined.

Dorman-Smith’s continued insistence on negotiating with the AFPFL annoyed the government in London to such an extent, that in August 1946, Prime Minister Clement Attlee replaced Dorman-Smith with Major General Hubert Rance. But much like Dorman-Smith, Rance could see the writing was on the wall for Burma. Nehru’s provisional government was in power in India, and they made it clear to Rance that the Indian Army would not help the British suppress the nationalists in Burma. Additionally, Rance was met with strikes against British rule when he took charge in Rangoon. On September 21st, 1946, Rance met with Aung San to discuss the best way to move forward. They agreed that they would create a new executive council. Rance would be the chair; Aung San would be the deputy chair as well as the council member in charge of defense and external affairs. While minorities would be included in the council, the majority of seats would be reserved for Burmans, particularly members of the AFPFL. What the Anglo-Burmans expressed concerns about at Simla had come to fruition. The Burmese were in control and pushing minorities aside.

41 The River of Lost Footsteps, 245-248.
42 The River of Lost Footsteps, 250-252.
Aung San wanted to find a way to bring the ethnic minorities into the fold, but his efforts were focused on the hill areas, particularly the Shan and Karen. The Anglo-Burmans were not a priority. Although they struggled to come to an agreement with the Karen, elections went ahead on April 7\textsuperscript{th}, 1947. The AFPFL won the overwhelming majority of the seats in Parliament. By May of 1947, Aung San and the AFPFL made it clear that Burma would be an independent sovereign republic as soon as possible, meaning they were declining dominion status within the British empire. Rance suspected that this response was due to the threat of partition in India.\footnote{Sir Hubert Rance to the Earl of Listowel, Telegram, May 27\textsuperscript{th}, 1947, IOR, Burma Office Records 1932-1948, M/4/2677, British Library, United Kingdom, in \textit{Burma: The Struggle for Independence, 1944-1948}, Vol. II (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1984), 362.}

Because the Hindus and Muslims in India continued to clash, the Government in India proposed to create two separate states.\footnote{Panigrahi, 338.} Aung San feared the British would come to a similar solution because the Karen and Burmans were unable to come to an agreement. Another one of the fears Anglo-Burmans had expressed was realized. Their connections to the British had been severed.

Independence did not bring peace to Burma either. While Aung San and the ethnic minorities in the hills were still working on plans for the future on July 19\textsuperscript{th}, 1947, Aung San, as well as six cabinet members were assassinated. Unfortunately, anti-unionists had trusted Aung San, and after his death were less confident that a peaceful agreement could be found. Without Aung San or the British to help support them, ethnic minorities such as the Karen and Anglo-Burmans, feared for their futures in Burma.\footnote{Charney, 68-71.} After the assassination, U Nu became the new Prime Minister. Rebellions against his government began to crop up in Arakan and Karen states. Nationalists continued to fight for a single Union, while the Karen wanted independence. The
violent civil war that ensued stood as an example to Anglo-Burmans as how their opinions would be taken in a new independent Burma, and it scared them.

These fears were reinforced by Nationalists publications that illustrated their distaste for mixing with other ethnicities. Published in 1955, Ma Ma Lay’s novel *Not Out of Hate* was a clear example of how some Burmans felt about European culture—the culture that many Anglo-Burman’s identified with—was detrimental to Burma. In it, a young woman, Way Way, idealized Western Culture and eventually married an anglicized Burman who lived entirely according to British traditions. He ate British style food, only took Western medicine, wore European style clothing, and lived in a European style house. After the wedding, Way Way’s husband U Saw Han, insisted that she live just as he did. The European food and medicine made her sick. And the sicker she became, the less U Saw Han would let her see her family. She eventually became isolated and depressed, eventually leading to her death. Nationalist publications such as this helped contribute to an environment in Burma that made those that were not Burmese feel unwelcome.

**Post-Simla**

British responses to the Anglo-Burman situation also illuminated the confusing position Eurasians were in after the Simla conference. Many in London concerned with the imminent independence of Burma seemed to find the resolutions of the Simla conference agreeable. They felt it was reasonable that Anglo-Burmans realized it would be advantageous to begin their assimilation into Burmese culture. In fact, they believed it “[appeared] to be the only course open

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to the community.” Other officials felt that the Community’s affinities with the British were exaggerated, and that they would be better served remaining in Burma, even during the evacuation. While there were many members already evacuated by the time of the Simla Conference the evacuation process was ongoing. Brigadier R.G.B. Prescott, the Chief of Police in Burma during the evacuation, claimed that “the number of Anglo-Burmans and Anglo-Indians in the refugee camp was small.” According to Prescott, they were not as persecuted by the Japanese as they claimed to be, at least from what he saw. When the Japanese were forced to evacuate Myitkyina, however, the number of Anglo-Burmans in the British camps increased, “the majority of whom were anxious to be flown out to India at once.” Although he did not have the resources to send them to India, he claimed that, “in any event I do not consider that it is a sound policy to attempt to evacuate all Anglo-Burmans and Anglo-Indians.” He felt the Anglo-Burman community would not find India to be the comfortable safe haven they have imagined it to be. Additionally, younger Anglo-Burmans would make good military recruits to help oust the Japanese from Burma.

He did not feel that Anglo-Burmans and Anglo-Indians should be evacuated at the earliest moment, even though that was the policy for Europeans. In fact, he eventually became annoyed by the Community’s insistence on better treatment because they were of partial European descent. He treated Eurasians the same as Burmans and Indians, which was standard operating procedure for the evacuation. Although he knew he was upsetting the Eurasian community, he had “no doubt that complaint will be made by certain of the refugees who


considered that they should have received special consideration and have been made rather a fuss of, but such complaints should be disregarded.” He then added that the British military in these camps “handled a very difficult task firmly but justly.” Anglo-Burmans cannot be lumped into a simple category. According to some military officers, they did not deserve to be treated as Europeans. This left them, in their minds, with one option, to be treated as Burmese. And when Anglo-Burmans tried to fight for different treatment, because they did not see themselves as Burmese, they were called fussy. British evacuation policies highlighted the “in-between” status of the Anglo-Burman.

Despite the relative optimism of the Simla conference, many Anglo-Burmans continued to plead for assistance in emigrating from Burma to either the United Kingdom or Australia. They disagreed with, or were unaware of, the conference resolutions, and felt remaining in independent Burma would not be a suitable option. Such descriptions of their plight demonstrated that, regardless of potential other meanings, the authors of these pleas for assistance felt positioning themselves as more British would be most advantageous to their future. Petitions make clear that they believed they needed to details their Anglo-Burman credentials, especially if they planned to emigrate to Australia. The Australian Government only wanted immigrants who at least looked European. It was a sensitive subject, but it was something that officials needed to verify before allowing Anglo-Burmans to immigrate. One Australian official wrote a letter of enquiry to the Governor of Burma in order to ascertain whether or not an applicant was “European” enough. In enquiring about one family, and his

49 Brigadier R.G.B. Prescott, Chief of Police, C.A.S. (B), report on his recent visit to Myitkyina, 1944.

50 For more information, see Warwick Anderson, The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health, and Racial Destiny in Australia, (Durham: Durham University Press, 2006). White Australian Policies were the practice of Australian Officials to look for ways to limit immigrants to Whites or Mostly Whites. There were a number of policies beginning in the early twentieth century.
family, this official remarked that “They are Anglo-Burman and the information I want is on the delicate point of how much is Anglo. Our practice generally is to take a lenient view of Anglo-Burmans and Anglo-Indians if they look reasonably white and are more than 50% European and admit them to Australia.” Admitting Anglo-Burmans was not about need, or charity; they had to look white. Policies such as these helped to create the complex identity maze Anglo-Burmans needed to navigate in the 1940s. After the war, officials within the Commonwealth wanted to entice white emigration to Australia. They felt they needed to “to maintain and strengthen this racial community.” Anglo-Burmans, if they were not white enough, therefore, could not help strengthen this racial community. They could never be European, but they needed to be as close to it as possible to be considered a good enough Anglo-Burman to move to Australia.

Policies such as these forced some to prove that they were proper Anglo-Burmans and eligible for assistance. They needed to demonstrate they were more British than Burmese. In a letter to the British Foreign Office from the Private Secretary to the Governor of Burma, Thomas Lewis Hughes campaigned for assisted passage to Australia on behalf of a retired Anglo-Burman civil servant—and a participant at the Anglo-Burman Conference in Simla—by the name of Mr. H Elliot. In the beginning of his letter, he stressed Elliot’s family tree:

On the subject of Elliot, I have been able to glean the following information. Elliot was born and educated in Madras. His father was a Sessions Judge in Southern India who claimed to be a distant relative of Lord Milton. Elliot’s first wife was a Miss Gibson, a member of a well known Anglo-Burman family. By her he had two daughters. His second wife was a Miss Tydale, also a member of a well-known Anglo-Burman family. The only issue of this marriage is a son.

51 Iven G. Mackay at the Office of the High Commissioner for the Commonwealth of Australia in India, manuscript letter to H.E. Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, GBE, 20 October 1944, FO 643/3 File 4A2 Internal Affairs; Evacuation; Arrangements for Burma Evacuees in India, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom.

52 They also discussed Canada and New Zealand to lesser extents.


54 T.L. Hughes, manuscript letter to Lieut-General, Sir Iven G. Mackay, 30 October 1944, FO 643/3 File 4A2 Internal Affairs; Evacuation; Arrangements for Burma Evacuees in India, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom.
Hughes laid out very clearly that Elliot was not only an Anglo-Burman, but one of good breeding. He was educated, a civil servant, and he had married a woman from a well-known Anglo-Burman family. They were required to list their antecedents in order to apply for assistance. Additionally, they had to have amiable qualities, making them more marketable as someone deserving assistance. Hughes argued that Elliot was highly revered and considered one of the leaders of the Anglo-Burman community. He also added that Elliot was fair skinned and could pass as a European. After establishing Elliot’s credentials, Hughes needed to establish that he was deserving, that he could perform his European identity. He stressed that Elliot was a leader, universally liked and respected. Most importantly, he looked and acted European. While he could never claim to be European, he could “pass”. Although he participated in the Simla conference, his confidence that their recommendations would be implemented was low. But Australia did not want people from mixed race populations, regardless of how European they behaved. While Elliot saw himself as above the Burmese, Australians viewed him as below European. Those pleading on Elliot’s behalf hoped by making him seem as close to European as possible would help his chances.

Some Australian officials wanted assisted passage schemes to be so strict that even Eurasians who were indistinguishable from Europeans would still not be allowed to take advantage of them. One official, in trying to ascertain what assisted passage schemes were in place to help British subjects travel to Australia, added that there would also most likely be Anglo-Burmans as well “who in the nature of things are of mixed race but probably of European habits of life and plainly by their desire to emigrate to Australia identify themselves with the

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55 T.L. Hughes to Sir Iven G. Mackay, 30 October 1944.
European manner of life. Many of the people concerned will have English names and be indistinguishable from English people unless they choose to reveal their mixed race.” Yet even though these Eurasians could be indistinguishable from Europeans, they would never be able to be equal. They would always be Anglo-Burman. He stressed that, even though they might appear to be British, it would be best if they were not treated as such. They needed to remain separate.56

Much like the arguments made when trying to define Anglo-Burmans in the Government of India Act of 1935, Eurasians were supposed to be clearly separated so they would not be able to take advantages of European privileges.

While over the next year the High Commissioner for India, Mr. Aubrey Dibdin would change his tune, initially, he also felt Anglo-Burmans would be better served remaining in Burma. In writing to explain to the British Civil Service his position on the pleas for assistance coming from some members of the Community, Dibdin explained that, “It is very easy to be sentimental about these cases and there is no doubt, some real hardship,” but he was quick to add why he thought, even though he felt bad for them, they did not necessarily feel they should be given assistance to emigrate. He added that those who were considering giving them assisted passage would be “apt to take on a different aspect when the individuals in question have been seen and interviewed.” While he did not elaborate, he seemed to be alluding to the fact that these hard cases were exaggerated in order to encourage the British government to provide assistance. Additionally, he argued that “almost all Anglo-Burmans (unless they are indistinguishable from Europeans), are better off in India or Burma then in the West, and generally want to return after a short experience of this country.” Lastly, he argued that, those who could pass for European were

“generally speaking those who [could] provide for their own passage and maintenance.”

Essentially, Dibdin felt that most Anglo-Burmans were not Anglo enough to live in the United Kingdom. They did not have the temperament to live in a European country, and they were not successful enough to be British, or else they would be able to afford the journey themselves.

Others also tried to grapple with the Community’s place in an independent Burma. Even Burmese officials felt that Anglo-Burmans who emphasized more European aspects of their identity would not be well suited to life in an independent Burma. The acting Chief Justice in Burma, Ba U, attached a note to Eric Alexander Franklin’s application for assisted passage to the United Kingdom. In it, he felt that Franklin would “entirely be out of place” in the new Burma. He also felt the need to qualify Franklin’s position. Not only was he “a very hard-working and efficient officer” he was also more European than Asian, and would therefore, “through no fault of his own” he would be unable to succeed. Additionally, Ba U saw how important language was to Franklin’s security. He argued that Franklin’s inability to speak Burmese would prevent him from being able to “compete successfully with Burmese officers in Government service in Burma.”

His attachment to his English language, as mentioned above, would make him an outsider in the Burmese Government. Others commenting on the memorials submitted by Anglo-Burmans agreed that they would not fare well in an independent Burma. Some felt that the Community’s members whose identities were rooted in their British upbringing would not be well suited in Burma. They felt that those whose “British outlook on affairs,” whose pride in their British ancestry, and whose manners and outlook were more “Anglo than Burman” would


not have a chance of succeeding in Burma with an independent Burmese government.\textsuperscript{59} What is important to note is that, only those who were more British than Burmese would be accepted in Britain. Not all Anglo-Burmans could survive in Britain.

In 1947, a committee of British officials convened in Burma to determine the validity of a number of claims for assisted passage. The committee then forwarded their resolutions on the matter to the Governor of Burma on August 12\textsuperscript{th}, 1947. Overall, this committee decided that the particular Anglo-Burmans who had submitted the applications that they were reviewing, deserved assisted passage. Even though the Burmese government promised not to terminate Anglo-Burman employees because of their affiliation, this committee acknowledged that these seven cases had enough to support their claims that they could not succeed in the future Burmese government.\textsuperscript{60} Like many mentioned above, they stressed—except for one member whose dissent will be discussed below—that “through no fault of [their] own” they had genuine cause for worry about their futures in independent Burma.\textsuperscript{61} They also felt it was important to counter the argument that, because the Anglo-Burman Association had proclaimed that British Burmans would make a go of things in Burma it meant that those who felt they could not succeed did not deserve assistance. They acknowledged that the Simla resolutions were not being overturned if these members chose to leave. But it also did not mean that the Association, “purporting to speak on behalf of the Anglo-Burman Community” should determine that Eurasians wanting to leave could not. In fact, the fact that “many members of that community are endeavouring to leave Burma” means they doubt “whether the said Association’s resolutions represent the opinion of

\textsuperscript{59} Unknown, manuscript letter to D. Fishwick, “Committee on the Applications of Mr. E.A. Franklin, Mr. P.R.H. Molloy, Mr. T.E. Lecky-Thompson, Mr. N.C. Hill, Mr. R. Broughton-Smart, Mr. O.H. Molloy, and Mr. J.E.C. Connor,” 25 November 1947, IOR, Burma Office Records 1932-1948, M/4/1877, British Library, United Kingdom.

\textsuperscript{60} Unknown to D. Fishwick, 25 November 1947.

\textsuperscript{61} Unknown to D. Fishwick, 25 November 1947.
that Community.” In short, these resolutions should not be “binding on the gentlemen whose applications the Committee are considering.” 62 This Committee acknowledged that not all Anglo-Burmans could fit into a singular category. While there were those who did want to stay in Burma, depending on how they identified, there was also a sizable population that wanted to leave.

While the majority of this committee agreed with the final report regarding applications for assistance, there was one member who had plenty to say against them. R. McGuire of the India Civil Service 63 said that he did agree that the Anglo-Burman community deserved sympathy. But he could not agree that these fears should be taken as proof that they could not survive in Burma after the end of colonization. In his opinion, “these fears, strong though they may be, must be considered in the light of Government policy and public pronouncements.” 64 McGuire did not want to say that Anglo-Burmans had no claim to come to the United Kingdom, but he did not think that Her Majesty’s Government should pay for their passage when they only have fears, and no legitimate reason to know that they could not succeed. Additionally, he countered the arguments of the rest of the committee against taking the Simla Conference’s resolution as a suggestion rather than a solid commitment on behalf of all Anglo-Burmans to give the new Burmese government a chance. He argued that this Community “as a whole, through representatives who so far as I know have not been disowned or discredited,” agreed to “the merging of their interests in Burma with the Burmese.” Because the leaders of this

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63 A member of the committee of British officials determining validity of Anglo-Burman claims for assisted passage.

64 Mr. McGuire, Attachment of Dissent, “Report of the Committee on the Applications of Mr. E.A. Franklin, Mr. P.R.H. Molloy, Mr. T.E. Lecky-Thompson, Mr. N.C. Hill, Mr. R. Broughton-Smart, Mr. O.H. Molloy, and Mr. J.E.C. Connor,” 25 November 1947, IOR, Burma Office Records 1932-1948, M/4/1877, British Library, United Kingdom.
conference had not been discredited, there was no reason, according to McGuire, why Anglo-Burmans should disregard the Simla resolutions. He even went as far as to claim that he did not “accept the contention that the decisions made by these representatives may not represent the opinion of a substantial portion of the community.”\footnote{Mr. McGuire, Attachment of Dissent, 25 November 1947.} If the attitudes of the Burmese Government, and Anglo-Burman representatives of the Community leaned “towards accepting the community as citizens of the Union with the free will of the members as expressed through their representatives and with their rights as equals guaranteed to them in the Union Constitution,” then why should they have such anxiety about trying to make a go of things in the independent government? In short, according to McGuire, they should not. He did not feel the fact that Anglo-Burmans would need to become Burmese citizens in order to retain their employment, “should be accepted by itself as increasing his fears for the future.”\footnote{Mr. McGuire, Attachment of Dissent, 25 November 1947.} McGuire did not feel that these fears alone were sufficient to justify support for emigration assistance.

McGuire’s strongest arguments relied on the fact that these anxieties were based on a hypothetical future. The Burmese government, according to McGuire, would appreciate the expertise Anglo-Burmans could provide, and the fact that the Anglo-Burman Association had agreed to try and become more Burmese and stay in the country, were taken as good signs that these officers could expect favorable treatment and success under the new government. He also doubted the government would discriminate against officers who were married to English women.\footnote{Mr. McGuire, Attachment of Dissent, 25 November 1947.} But McGuire disregarded the arguments these Anglo-Burmans put forward. Even though they were born and raised speaking Burmese, he sidestepped the conversation about the
use of Burmese. Without taking into consideration the European side of their identities, he was making assumptions about the future. McGuire also believed that Anglo-Burmans should become Burmese citizens, rather than seek assistance from the British Government. He argued that, so long as the “Anglo-Burman community, as citizens of the Burma Union, continue to support and do not oppose the Constitution, the provisions of the Constitution remain effective for them.” And there was no reason to believe that, sometime down the line, a new government could go back on their agreements to treat Anglo-Burmans as a part of the Union.\(^{68}\) McGuire did not feel that he needed to discuss where Anglo-Burmans belonged based on their heritage and upbringing, as others had done. When it came to why they should remain in Burma, it was because of the agreements and pronouncements made, as well as the fact that they were partially Asian.

In fact, the British Government was actively discouraging Eurasians from emigrating to the United Kingdom at all because they were not European. However, if those determined to leave ignored the official policy, the government argued that they should still not be given assistance. Those that wanted to leave needed to have the financial means to transport themselves there. This, however, was difficult for most members of the community because they had lost everything in the war. But it did not matter, because Eurasians were not European, they did not have a right to live in the United Kingdom, therefore they should not be given money to do so. In fact, one colonial official went as far as to argue that Eurasians “are to be refused financial assistance on the grounds that there would be no advantage in their leaving the country of domicile.”\(^{69}\)

\(^{68}\) Mr. McGuire, Attachment of Dissent, 25 November 1947.

Others opposed to providing assistance to Anglo-Burmans hung on the issue of nationality. The question was, should these members have British or Burmese nationality? Governor Dorman-Smith, who was very supportive of the Simla Conference, believed that only those who were mostly European, or were domiciled Europeans, should be given assistance. Like McGuire, Dorman-Smith, felt sympathy for the officers afraid for their future. Since he was one of the biggest supporters of the Simla conference, however, he did not want to see the resolutions fail. So, he couched his arguments in terms that made it seem that providing assistance in general would be negative for the government. For instance, he argued that, while he was in support of providing assistance for only two of the seven officers, he knew it would “cause the Government embarrassment, but I am quite prepared to go ahead.” But beyond that, the other applications should not be accepted, even though he worried that “H.M.G. might well feel disposed on moral grounds to pass orders for full compensation.” He wanted to make it clear that, while Anglo-Burmans might have deserved sympathy, they were to be considered Burmese after independence, and it was the responsibility of the Burmese government to make sure the Community was not passed over. Even though the British government might feel a moral obligation due to their blood connection with this population, it was not necessary for them to take care of the Community. Again, the Anglo-Burman association declared, in the presence of Dorman-Smith himself at the Simla conference, that they would engross themselves in independent Burma and would stop seeking special assistance from the British.

There were some officials that believed some Anglo-Burmans could be more “Anglo” and less “Burman,” therefore justifying their treatment as European rather than Asian.

70 Sir Hubert Rance, Governor of Burma, manuscript letter to William Hare, Secretary of State for Burma, 19 December 1947, IOR, Burma Office Records 1932-1948, M/4/1877, British Library, United Kingdom.
Laithwaite, for instance, was surprised that the Governor of Burma had taken a stance against treating some Anglo-Burmans as European and allowing them to emigrate to a more country dominated by a white population. And his surprise stemmed from the fact that, they seemed very European with their language, religion, and customs. One of them was even “turning himself into an Englishman.” There was no complication. He was practically an Englishman in Laithwaite’s eyes. And being practically English would in fact put him at a disadvantage in independent Burma. He argued that, “having regard to the fact that Burma becomes a foreign country, that the Anglo-Burman who decides to come down on the Anglo side of the fence, has ‘through no fault of his own, legitimate cause for anxiety about his future in Government Service in Burma.’”

In order to qualify for assistance, Anglo-Burmans needed to choose a side of the fence. With Independence, it became increasingly difficult for Anglo-Burmans to maintain an in-between status of being both British and Burman. Eurasians, exhibiting their European heritage would not be welcome in the new Burma. Laithwaite believed that, “For whatever Ministers may say, the Anglo-Burman who is not prepared to go Burman, is not going to be welcome to the Burmese in the future and he will know it.” Anglo-Burmans did not belong with the Burmese, so those that fell on the Anglo side of the fence should be treated as European, rather than just allowing for their complex amalgamation of an identity. Much like the Eurasian populations in Hong Kong, Anglo-Burmaness vacillated “between being a privilege, an asset at one moment but a social stigma or personal albatross at another. Articulating Eurasianness becomes a lifelong process of self-definition and redefinition.” They struggled with belonging. They were from Burma, but


72 Sir Gilbert Laithwaite to Dorman-Smith, 19 December 1947.

73 Vicky Lee, Being Eurasian: Memories Across Racial Divides (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 4.
culturally aligned themselves with the British. Yet, many times over, the British refused to accept them as their own. They were above the Burmese, but not British.

There were some officials that were under the impression Eurasians were in this position because they put themselves there. So, while they could understand why Anglo-Burmans, due to his European upbringing, would align themselves with the British over the Burmese, this was their personal choice. Their According to this view, Anglo-Burmese fears and anxieties were also their own doing and they should not be given compensation. They chose to reject their Burmese heritage rather than considering how they would truly be treated in independent Burma.⁷⁴ The only reason the Community was arguing that they would be discriminated against in independent Burma was because they had decided to retain their British associations. These people did not have the right to claim allegiance to the British because they were Asian. Those who viewed Eurasians as not European also claimed that the Community were not model citizens, given further justification for not wanting them to emigrate from Burma. In particular, British Officials felt that some Anglo-Burmans were lying on applications by claiming that they were “pure British Europeans.”⁷⁵ Of course, these liars would like to be considered European, but according to the High Commissioner in India, they were not and therefore should not be able to claim the same privileges that to which Europeans were entitled. Britons, Anglo-Burmans, and Burmese alike struggled to understand where this mixed-race population belonged.

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Conclusion

The end of World War II and the push towards Burmese independence illuminated the complex space where Anglo-Burmans resided. Being located between the British and Burmese, as they had always seen themselves, would no longer work. Within a relatively short period of time, Anglo-Burmans attempted to redefine and reposition themselves to secure their own futures. While evacuated in India, Anglo-Burmans began reaching out to the British government in exile, worried about their future. The government responded by organizing a conference in Simla, India to determine the future of the Community. At this time, it was clear that Burma would be independent in the near future. Burmese nationalists had worked with the British to drive the Japanese out and were working in talks with the British about the next steps towards independence. But as they stepped closer and closer to independence, British Burmans became very insecure about their futures. As a community that had historically expressed their European style upbringing and manners, they were unsure how they would fare moving forward. Because the British Burman community had historically identified with the British, prior to Simla, they claimed allegiance due to their similar cultural attributes, masculine traits, religious affiliation, and primary language.

The Simla Conference in 1944, however, was meant to be a major turning point for the Anglo-Burman Community. As it became evident that Burma would gain its independence in the 1940s, the Community felt they needed to decide: Would they maintain their current allegiance to the British? Or would they realign themselves with the Burmese? With the growth of nationalism and imminent independence, at the Simla Conference in 1944, prominent members of the Community determined it best to de-emphasize their British identity and stress their Asian heritage. They would no longer focus on the shared cultural European traits with Britons. Rather,
they determined it best to focus on Burma as their homeland. They attempted to find a place in the new Burma while struggling with their complex place between the Burmese and British. As plans continued for independence, however, many feared they would not be secure in the new Burma. They denied that the Simla resolutions applied to them and pleaded for assistance to immigrate to a different part of the British Empire. In these pleas they stressed the similar cultural traits that tied the Community to the British. These appeals increased after independence, as well be discussed in the next chapter. But the British immigration schemes between 1948-1960 also highlighted the complicated place that the Anglo-Burmans held due to their mixed-race status, and it is to that story that we will now turn.
CHAPTER 4

Injustice Becomes our Middle Name: Assisted Emigration and the Anglo-Burman

Burmese independence in 1948 only heightened Anglo-Burman fears for their futures. And many were looking to find ways to emigrate within the British Empire—usually to Britain, Australia, or New Zealand. They continued to stress their British associations as a way to demonstrate to the British that their European lifestyle, upbringing, and British heritage made them deserving of help. Although the numbers are difficult to track, it is estimated that about 5,000 Anglo-Burmans had fled Burma by mid-1949 and those numbers only continued to climb. Discussions of citizenship in Britain also created more hurdles for the Community. As those looking to leave Burma continued to fight for assistance, the complex dynamics between the British and Anglo-Burmans continued to play important roles for the Community. Those participating in the discussions over assisted passage schemes illuminated the complexity in British and Anglo-Burman understandings of who was British and who was not.

Assisted passage schemes, in which people could apply for relocation costs, including ships’ passage and train fare, played a major role in the British Empire. Most of the assistance, however, was provided to white Britons. From the 1830s onward, emigrants from Britain to Australia often received assistance from the British government. These schemes continued well

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into the twentieth century. Similar schemes were set in place for Canada and New Zealand.\(^2\)

However, migration of non-whites from the colonies to the metropole did occur, although numbers remained relatively small. In 1925, for example, there were 7,500 non-white West Indian servicemen working in Britain. It was not until after World War 2 that Britain saw a greater influx of non-white migration. In 1951 non-white immigrants in Britain were estimated at around 50,000. By 1961 that number had increased to 500,000.\(^3\) Most migration from this time period was from South Asia. The second largest group of immigrants came were from the West Indies, marked by the arrival of the *SS Empire Windrush* in 1948. Immigrants also came from Southeast Asia, Africa, and China. There were some public and private schemes in place to help finance the trip to Britain for immigrants coming to the UK to work. However, only a small number of migrants had access to these schemes.\(^4\) This influx of non-white migration caused many officials to push for restrictions to migration. Colonial governments were discouraging non-whites from emigrating. Although restrictive legislation was only passed in 1962.\(^5\) Informal attempts to limit non-white immigration left Anglo-Burmans who were trying to leave Burma stranded.

Burma was also facing drastic changes that would leave the British Burman community feeling insecure. After Aung San’s assassination, U Nu came to power, and civil war soon followed. By the time the British had left all government control to the Burmese, there were two insurgencies in the county from two different communist groups, the Red Flag Communists and


\(^3\) Harper and Constantine, 183-185.


the Communist Party of Burma. With the help of the Karen, U Nu was able to put down the revolts, but the Karen soon started to wonder if they should have been pushing for their own demands rather than helping prop the government up. They began building up their own military and demanding separation from Burma. But in December 1948, the Burmese military struck first, killing Karen civilians in a Karen town north of Rangoon. General Ne Win then established himself as the head of the Karen Army. Some Anglo-Burmans even participated in suppressing other Karen battalions trying to take back their military. There were also general strikes throughout the country including one from civil servants that effectively shut down the government. All over the country, there was broad dissatisfaction with the Burma Union. Under these conditions, the Burmese military became a prominent fixture of independent Burma. U Nu also began official state sponsorship of Buddhism, which left people of other religions in the country, such as Christian Anglo-Burmans, alienated.\(^6\)

Many members of the Community found themselves trapped in Independent Burma. With such a heavy military presence that very publicly put down groups that did not agree with the direction the government had taken, a number of Anglo-Burmans feared publicly declaring their dissatisfaction. Eurasians in India and Burma feared the growing violence in their countries. Anglo-Indians and Anglo-Burmans alike feared that their association with the British would make them targets.\(^7\) Therefore, they reached out yet again to the British for assistance, but the situation had changed. Those that remained in Burma after World War II had become “Burmese” citizens. This was triggering a great debate as to whether or not Anglo-Burmans deserved British assistance. On their part, Anglo-Burmans insisted that it was their “Britishness” that should

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qualify them for migration assistance, regardless of residence. The concerns about what was occurring in Burma forced them once again to critically examine how they needed to position themselves in order to be accepted by the British. As neither Burmese nor British, they were struggling with how to justify their worth to Britons.

**Conflicting Perceptions, 1947-1960**

Independence brought with it discussions over nationality and citizenship in Burma. Prior to independence, the executive council established to put together the independent Burmese government finalized their understandings of citizenship as “those born of indigenous parents, to those with one grandparent of an indigenous race, and to British subject who had resided in Burma for eight of the ten years preceding January 1, 1942, or preceding the coming into force of the constitution and who had elected permanent residency and citizenship.”¹⁸ The fate of the many Anglo-Burmans remaining in the country hung in the balance. They had a choice to make: either choose Burmese citizenship and relinquish the special status they had enjoyed with their British heritage; or opt to become British, and forever leave the country of their birth. The Burmese Constitution left Anglo-Burmans feeling as though they had to make a decision, but uncertainty reigned. Many were unsure what the future would entail – therefore they did not know which citizenship would be most beneficial. Anglo-Burman identity was tied to both Britishness and “Burmeseness”; therefore, being forced to make that choice was complex. It was still unclear to what extent education and the government would be Burmanized after independence. Many were not sure if Burmese “would be used solely as the language of the Courts” or if English would be completely phased out in all aspects of civil life. If English was

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completely removed from the work force, Anglo-Burmans would not be able to survive, as the
majority did not speak Burmese. But if, as many hoped, their mother tongue would still be used
in the public sector, they felt the Community could happily live in Burma, and maintain their
connection to the land in which they were raised. They struggled with being forced into one of
two categories, because they were an amalgamation of both. Thankfully, the Burmese
Independence Bill stated that “a person, whose father or paternal grandfather was born outside
Burma and within His Majesty’s dominions, shall not cease to be a British subject.” Such a
clause provided avenues for Anglo-Burmans to remain a part of Great Britain, in case, at some
later date, they found life in Burma untenable.

Petitions for governmental assistance make it clear that many Anglo-Burmans did not
want to remain in Burma. A number of British officials argued that if they wanted to move to the
United Kingdom, Anglo-Burmans should have retained a permanent connection to the United
Kingdom whilst living in Burma, and found their claims to Britishness unconvincing. This
group was optimistic that Anglo-Burmans would be able to find a new place in independent
Burma. In fact, they were convinced that they would be able to continue using English. Others
argued that, an officer who retained “his British nationality, even if he [had] Burmese nationality
forced on him as well, [would] not be persona grata to any future Burmese administration under
which he has to serve.”

9 Ba U, “Note attached to Memorial,” 14 October 1947, India Office Records (hereafter IOR), Burma Office

10 Unknown, manuscript letter to D. Fishwick, concerning the Committee on the Applications of Mr. E.A. Franklin,
Mr. P.R.H. Molloy, Mr. T.E. Lecky-Thompson, Mr. N.C. Hill, Mr. R. Broughton-Smart, Mr. O.H. Molloy, and Mr.
J.E.C. Connor, 25 November 1947, India Office Records (hereafter IOR), Burma Office Records 1932-1948,

11 Ba U, 14 October 1947.

12 Unknown, manuscript letter to D. Fishwick, 25 November 1947.
Burmans from emigrating. The majority of the British officials involved in the Anglo-Burman question, therefore, were confident that Anglo-Burmans were better suited to stay in Burma rather than relocate to Britain.

World War II forced the British to radically reconceive both the “Nation” and “citizenship.” People who were once considered British subjects merely because they were domiciled in a British Colony now needed to have new designations. The British Nationality Act of 1948 (BNA) created new parameters for understanding ‘belonging’ in the British Empire. In the late 1930s, as commonwealth nations were developing their own nationality laws, officials in Great Britain decided they needed to establish new parameters for subject status. The war interrupted discussions temporarily, but in February 1947, a conference of representatives from the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Ireland, Newfoundland, Southern Rhodesia, Burma, and Ceylon met to discuss the future of British citizenship.13 Eventually, the BNA was drafted. In it, it was determined that on January 1st, 1949, previous Nationality Acts would be declared void. Furthermore, each “person born within the United Kingdom and Colonies after 1 January 1949 [was] a citizen, unless his father [was] either an envoy of a foreign sovereign, or an enemy alien and the birth occur[ed] in a place occupied by the enemy.”14

The British Nationality Act (BNA) created new complications for how Anglo-Burmans should position themselves.15 British subjects in colonies that had opted to remain part of the

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British Commonwealth could maintain their status. But the Burmese nationalists wished for total independence, seeing any ties to their former colonial power as unacceptable. This left the Anglo-Burmans in a precarious situation. In order to gain access to British citizenship, they needed to prove they had a male family member in the paternal line, born in the United Kingdom. If they could accomplish this, they effectively would become British citizens in a foreign country with the right to travel throughout the Commonwealth as they pleased. What complicated things for many people was the idea that citizenship was not defined by domicile, but rather on “birth and descent.” As many officials remarked, the “new conception of citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies also [introduced] new difficulties in deciding which persons should be eligible for assistance.” With citizenship based on birth and descent rather than domicile, more would be eligible for assistance. The government potentially would have too many people eligible for immigration assistance to the United Kingdom. Thus, some officials advocated for more restrictive understandings of citizenship with regards to assisted passage schemes. They genuinely feared that “the Act [would] admit to the record Anglo-Indians and even some pure Asiatics in addition to pure Europeans.”

Many British officials struggled with the new definitions of citizenship. Some felt uncomfortable allowing anyone but ‘pure’ Europeans to emigrate. They felt that anyone with Asian blood would be “unable to settle down.” While they could encourage Anglo-Burmans to remain in Burma—feeling their complex identities would not hinder their future—those same

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17 So long as the commonwealth country they were traveling to did not have their own nationality or citizenship laws.

identities would make them unsuitable for life in Britain. They argued that for these reasons, “the equal treatment of all citizens of the United Kingdom is not considered practical.”\textsuperscript{19} This perceived potential inability to acclimatize to Britain was not seen as stemming from inadequate integration and relocation programs on arrival; rather, the fault was with the shortcomings of people with Asian blood, who were by nature too “unBritish” to fit comfortably into a Britain still struggling to recover from World War II.\textsuperscript{20}

Like many other European countries, the British government had several assistance schemes that were designed to help people in the colonies recover from World War II.\textsuperscript{21} Among these was one meant to assist British citizens relocate to the United Kingdom. Anglo-Burmans who applied were consistently rejected. London officials justified their decisions based on nuances over new understandings of citizenship such as domicile. Some believed that only those in dire situations should be able to apply for assistance, and that an applicant should prove that he had “made his home (as distinct from being a visitor or student) in the U.K. for a substantial period or [was] going to join a very near relative fully established in the U.K. at the latter’s invitation.” The applicant should also have arrangements made ahead of time for himself and his dependents. Additionally, the applicant needed to be mentally and physically capable of earning an income. And lastly, that he needed to make “a good citizen.”\textsuperscript{22}

But what constituted a ‘good citizen’? That remained unclear. By leaving requirements open to vague interpretation, officials wanted a subjective reason to disqualify those they thought

\textsuperscript{19} P.J. Noel-Baker, manuscript letter to His Excellency Lt. General Sir A. Nye, High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in India and His Excellency Sir L. Garferty-Smith High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Pakistan, 9 March 1949, FO 371/123374, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom.

\textsuperscript{20} Panikos Panayi, \textit{An Immigration History of Britain} (Harlow, Pearson Education Limited, 2010), 137-140.

\textsuperscript{21} A more thorough explanation of these schemes is in Chapter 2.

\textsuperscript{22} Unknown, to R.L. Speaight Esq., 23 February 1955.
were not “British” enough to live in Britain. Anglo-Burmans, essentially, had to demonstrate their fitness to live in the United Kingdom, rather than deserving it simply because they were “British”. Mr. Carmuthers of the Board of Trade also claimed that this particular scheme was only “intended for persons with genuine United Kingdom connexions [sic.] – it is noteworthy that reference is always made to persons ‘returning’ to the United Kingdom.” While the scheme never explicitly stated this wording meant only those that were from the United Kingdom could qualify, those reading applications clearly feared an influx of people with mixed Asian descent. It bothered some officials that “under current British nationality law some people have been able to qualify as citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies whose connexion [sic.] with the United Kingdom was remote.” While they were considered citizens, they were still outsiders. Thus, Carmuthers wanted to make sure to emphasize the difference between citizens raised in the United Kingdom, and those who were not. He wanted to add to the application process a line that would make it clear that these “schemes were not intended to replace war damage compensation in Burma and that they were intended for people returning to the United Kingdom.” His office believed the scheme was never meant for “Anglo/Burmese who had lived all their life in Burma, even though they now qualify for citizenship in the United Kingdom and Colonies.”

Notions of Domicile played an important role in this complexity. In arguing that where one was raised should be an attribute of one’s citizenship, some officials tried to diminish Anglo-Burmans claims to emigrate to the United Kingdom on the basis of their personal failings, broadly drawn. Carmuthers put it that many of the those applying for assistance in the early 1950s initially “tried to throw their lot with Burma.” His implication was clear: These people had been happy to oust the British from Burma and advocate for independence, so why should the

23 Mr. G.H. Carmuthers Board of Trade to Mr. Shelby, Far Eastern War Damage Schemes, 11 February 1954, FO 371/111998, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom.
British help them now? He further found that “the Burmese Government’s employment policy [was] squeezing them out” which made them decide to “only recently…return or come for the first time to this country.”

In other words, applicants were not British citizens looking to return home; they were trying to take advantage of the generosity of the British government now that their first plan had failed and they were looking for a way out. To Carmuthers, Anglo-Burmans had had their chance to be British when Burmese independence had been mooted. They had chosen to align themselves with Burmese nationalists and reject Britain. Therefore, they were not British, even if they had a legal claim to citizenship under the 1948 Act.

Not everyone agreed. Some believed that citizenship should include notions of domicile and that Anglo-Burmans should be included, with the right to immigrate to the United Kingdom. In a letter to a British Member of Parliament, Allen Knight of the Foreign Office argued that, while at “first sight it would appear that the United Kingdom British Subjects mean only those born and brought up in the United Kingdom,” he added that it was not so. Just because someone was born and raised in Burma did not mean they were not a British citizen. He also added that this point was supported by a “statement…which says ‘over 4500 applications were received by the Board of Trade during the three years the schemes were in operation including applications’ from many overseas British that were not domiciled in Britain. The fact that the applications were included in the initial process of repatriation demonstrated to Knight that Anglo-Burmans had the right to move to the United Kingdom as British citizens.

Clearly there were still some that felt it acceptable to allow for more complex understandings of British citizenship and

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24 Far Eastern War Damage Schemes, 11 February 1954.

identity. While they may have been raised somewhere else, they were British by birth. Domicile was not the biggest factor in determining citizenship for these officials.

Many Anglo-Burmans began making stronger assertions of their British identity, desperate to use the schemes available for migration out of Burma. One such person was Ethel Buchanan, who, beginning in 1946, began a campaign of letter-writing to politicians in London. Buchanan described the plight of Anglo-Burmans as dire should the British not arrange for their repatriation in the United Kingdom; her correspondents included the Foreign Office, the Home Office, and even the Prime Minster. In her letters, she asked if the British public was aware that “in speaking of Freedom and Independence the Burmese politicians mean that Independence and Freedom of thought and action is to be the sole right of the one Burmese group, and in particular the Buddhist Burmese.” She asserted that if anyone, including Anglo-Burmans, spoke out against the inequality, they put themselves at risk of “being attacked personally—either decoited or killed outright.”

She attempted to convince the British that not only were members of the community unhappy with the new arrangements in Burma, their physical wellbeing was also at risk.

Specifically addressing Anglo-Burmans, she asked if they thought the British were also aware that:

in every office and Government Department, every [Anglo-Burman] is to be ousted. The only reply the Burmese politicians has is – ‘We don’t care—if [Anglo-Burmans] wish to remain in Burma, they must become Burmese, and live as Burmese.’

In continuing to emphasize the precarious situation her community faced in independent Burma, she claimed that they were unable to find employment after the Burmese removed them from

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27 Ethel B. Buchanan to Sir Waldon Smithers, 1947.
their jobs. Buchanan wrote that if they “appeal to Britain [publicly], it will be used against [them].” Therefore, she pleaded for the recipients of her letters to send an open letter to newspapers in order to bring to light Burmese discrimination against the community.²⁸

Buchanan was not content to raise awareness of the inequalities facing Anglo-Burmans; she wanted material assistance. In order to persuade her readers, she utilized many of the tactics Anglo-Burmans had used at the Simla Conference. She stressed her community’s innate connection to the British: “These people [British government officials] know us, because we are of them. We want to appeal to these people and to the British public—our kith and kin in reality - our religion - culture and outlook in life - to raise a fund for the Rehabilitation of Anglo-Burmans.” While acknowledging that the Anglo-Burman community did not represent a large population, she claimed that they had “helped in the largest measure, to form, protect and consolidate Britain’s Empire.” This, she believed, should warrant representation for Anglo-Burmans on the various committees holding talks on the future of Burma. Towards the end of her letter she exclaimed

Oh! what is to happen to us if Britain repudiates her responsibility for us and our future? Let both Britain and Burma put it down in black and white—and then let Britain send ships and money to take us out of the country and place us where we can live in peace and freedom and be suitably employed.

Until these requests could be delivered, she suggested that the British retain control of Burma to further protect the Anglo-Burman community.²⁹ It is not clear if Buchanan ever agreed with the Simla Conference resolutions. It is also unclear if she was speaking on behalf of a particular

²⁸ Ethel B. Buchanan to Sir Waldron Smithers, 1947. She does not specify if she meant newspapers in the United Kingdom or in Burma. Given that she asks if the British public was aware of the discrimination against Anglo-Burmans, it seems likely she meant British newspapers.

²⁹ Ethel B. Buchanan to Sir Waldron Smithers, 1947.
Anglo-Burman community or if she was only relying on her own experiences—which may be why it took almost a year for someone in London to raise the issues in her letter in Parliament.

Although Buchanan began sending these letters in 1947, the various recipients only gave her their attention in passing until Sir Waldron Smithers, Conservative MP for Orpington in Kent, took up her cause. By 1948, British officials had been holding considerable discussions about the Anglo-Burman Community among themselves. Smithers broached the subject at two separate sittings of Parliament. He implored his fellow MPs to earnestly consider the plight of this community. While it had been the stance of the British government to accept the resolutions of the Simla Conference, and therefore not interfere, British Prime Minister Clement Atlee agreed to take these concerns under consideration. He claimed that he “would always consider any individual hard cases,” but matters would be decided on a case-by-case basis rather than a blanket policy.\(^{30}\) This may have been to allow for subjective interpretations as to whether a particular applicant met the criteria for “Britishness”, broadly conceived.

The government in London proceeded to request reports concerning the position of Anglo-Burmans in order to ascertain the validity of Buchanan’s claims. In response, Sir Hubert Rance, the British governor of Burma admitted that there were certain individuals requesting assistance in emigrating from Burma.\(^{31}\) He argued that, despite assurances from the Burmese government that Anglo-Burmans would be treated equally, “there is no doubt a great deal of anxiety being privately expressed by Anglo-Burmans [regarding] their future.” He was quick to qualify his assertions, however, by emphasizing that those seeking emigration assistance were

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\(^{31}\) Sir Hubert Rance remained Governor of Burma until the official handover of power on January 4\(^{th}\), 1948.
mainly “those who have been brought up with western outlook and background.”\textsuperscript{32} Although his need to stress that those wanting to leave Burma were individuals more closely aligned to the British, it also indicates that there were more Anglo-Burmans straying from the Anglo-Burman Association’s resolution at Simla to emphasize Asian aspects of their identity so as to secure a future in an independent Burma. The British Burman attendants of the Simla conference clearly did not understand how the rest of the community would react to Burmese independence.

Other individual Eurasians expressed fear at their fate once the British left, along with their desire for emigration assistance. In a note concerning the position of Anglo-Burmans in 1947, the Anglo-Burman Association acknowledged that these individuals felt “that they have no hope for a future in Burma, since education [had] been denied to their children. The result [was] that a great impetus has been given to an already latent desire to emigrate to the Colonies.”\textsuperscript{33} While they may have once desired to stay in Burma due to their connections with their Burmese heritage, many British Burmans claimed that their exclusive use of English connected them to the British. And since the Burmese government failed to fulfill their promises to ensure the community could continue their English education, some “individual” Anglo-Burmans—which was how the note deliberately labeled these members of the community—no longer wanted to abide by the Simla resolutions.

The note also stressed Anglo-Burman “heroic actions” in defending Burma during the evacuation of the colony during WWII to demonstrate the “Britishness” of the Community. Unlike similar assertions made during the Simla conference, in which their heroism was

\textsuperscript{32}Sir Hubert Rance, manuscript letter to William Hare, 12 November 1947. IOR, Burma Office Records 1932-1948, M/4/1410, British Library, London, United Kingdom.

\textsuperscript{33}A note on the present position of the Anglo-Burman Community, 4 September 1947. IOR, Commission, Committee and Conference Records 1895-1948, Q/7/4/141D, British Library, London, United Kingdom.
emphasized as putting them on the “side” of the British and against the Japanese as evidence that Anglo-Burmans deserved a say in the future of Burma, now authors claimed that their heroic actions including “their record of excellent work” during the war should demonstrate some “justification for assistance to those who feel that they should like to continue to remain within the British Commonwealth of Nations.”

Again, the language used was deliberate. Their claims also demonstrate Anglo-Burman commitments to the British. This community saw itself as working with and for the British government during the war, thereby justifying the emphasis they placed on the European traits – and asserting that the British “owed them” assistance in return.

More and more letters regarding the situation of Anglo-Burmans began to cross the desks of British officials. In 1948, Sir Reginald James Bowker, the High Commissioner, and later British Ambassador, to Burma, created a report regarding individual requests for British assistance to immigrate to other countries in the Commonwealth. He summarized three specific cases: Mrs. Edith M. Moment, Mr. E. Sausman, and Mr. Jes G. Grage. In their individual letters, which were provided in full in the report, they emphasized their British heritage in an attempt to illicit sympathy from the British government. They stressed the importance of English language education for their children as well as feeling that they no longer belonged in Burma since the British would not govern it. Moment argued that her family could not return to Burma—she was still in India at this time—because she “[found] it quite impossible to identify with the Burmese in language, dress, manners, mode of living and religion and [she was] not prepared to forfeit [her] birthright - [her] status as a British subject.”

While the discussion of similarities in

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34 A note on the present position of the Anglo-Burman Community.

language, religion, and culture were not new claims among Anglo-Burmans, in this instance they were being used to deny her Burmese identity at a time when other portions of the community were trying to celebrate it.

These desperate pleas for assistance and alterations of how they presented themselves left an impact on British officials’ opinions of the community. Waldron Smithers was not alone in advocating for Anglo-Burmans at the highest levels of government. This sympathetic attitude from some quarters encouraged Anglo-Burmans to continue to insist that the British government help them leave Burma. Another British official convinced by Anglo-Burman pleas for help was A. Dibdin. In a letter to the Foreign Office, he argued that the Anglo-Burman Community should be treated differently than Anglo-Indians. British Burmans made up “a special case.” He elaborated on his point by claiming that “Europeans and Anglo-Indians want to move for convenience” but “Burma has become a foreign country to Anglo-Burmans.” He was also persuaded by the arguments that Anglo-Burmans, due to their connections—hereditary as well as cultural—were inextricably tied to the British. Dibdin claimed that Burma becoming a foreign country to the community was “forced on them by politics, making their relocation the responsibility of [Her Majesty’s Government].”

Waldron Smithers not only brought the issue to the attention of Parliament. He also complied with Buchanan’s request to publish her concerns and appeals in *The Times*. However, almost immediately, Campagnac responded by reaffirming the resolution to deny special treatments in Burma and to try to adopt their Asian ancestry in favor of their European heritage. He penned a letter to the *Times* on behalf of the Anglo-Burman Association, stating that the individual remarks from Buchanan were just that, the opinions of one individual. He also

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stressed that they did not want the British to hold up the independence of Burma until a
delegation of Anglo-Burmans had approved the bill, as Buchanan had suggested. “Anglo-
Burmans,” according to Campagnac, “are a responsible people and no reasonable members of
the community would suggest the Independence Bill should be amended or delayed for the sake
of a very small group of Burmese people.” He continued by arguing that “Those Anglo-Burmans
who elect to remain in Burma will…show the same loyalty and devotion to the Burmese
Government and to Burma [that they previously showed to the British], for the re-conquest of
which so many of them fought and died, as they showed to the British Government in the past.”37
While he was still willing to write to the British privately for assistance for the community,
making public declarations that placed the Anglo-Burman community at odds with the new
Burmese government was going too far. They fit in a complicated place in the new Burma and
members of the community were grappling in different ways to find their place.

As the influx of letters from Eurasians desperately pleading for help to leave independent
Burma illustrated, Anglo-Burmans could not be either British or Burman. Many had no desire to
become more Asian than European. They understood themselves as Anglo-Burmans, a mix of
cultures raised with European habits. Yet at every turn, Anglo-Burmans continually were shown
that only ‘pure’ Europeans would receive help leaving Burma, a country that was rapidly
becoming foreign to many members of the Community. For instance, Europeans had to show,
without a doubt, that they were of pure European descent in order to receive compensation for
war losses. They were often told that their documentation regarding their family trees was not
sufficient.38 If they wanted full compensation for war losses—such as the loss of their homes and

37 C.H. Campagnac, manuscript letter to the Editor, The New Times of Burma, 7 November 1947, IOR, Burma

38 James Esson Cleal Connor, Deputy Commissioner Sandoway, Arakan Division, manuscript letter to Sir Hubert
personal belongings—they needed to illustrate that their paternal lines were entirely British. Otherwise, they might be Anglo-Burman. For example, in a letter from R.W.D. Fowler, a member of the India Civil Service, to a British man named Connor applying for assistance, Fowler explained that while he had sufficiently demonstrated that his paternal grandfather was of pure European descent, “you have not shown that your paternal grandmother was of pure European descent. I suggest that you should fill in this gap in your case and should then repeat your statement in the form of an affidavit.” He had to be as thorough as possible. Anglo-Burmans needed to have Europeans in their paternal line, whereas pure Europeans needed to illustrate they did not have Asian maternal grandparents.

Seeing how stringent the terms were for full Europeans applying for assistance, many Anglo-Burmans felt it crucial, once again, to stress how they would not fit in to a newly independent Burma. As had occurred before the Simla resolution, these members of the Community illustrated the importance of English language education to their identity. The Anglo-Burmans were not alone in this. As Ann Stoler as stressed, for many Eurasian populations globally, language “was seen to provide proper content and form: the structure, idioms, ways of thinking, and cultural referents in which children’s ‘character formation’ would take shape.” Campagnac struggled to follow the official Anglo-Burman resolutions while securing protections for the Community. He consistently emphasized the importance of education. In a confidential note to British officials in Burma, he explained how the loss of grants in aid for English language

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39 Only the last name of “Connor” was given in this correspondence.


schools, one of the privileges the Anglo-Burman Association agreed to forgo, would be detrimental to many Eurasians. He argued that, “Members of the community cannot therefore be educated in their home language, which will only be taught as a second language after the primary stage.” Even though they were most likely born and raised in Burma, English was their mother tongue.

It is important to note that these privileges were something the Community had requested during the Simla Conference but had agreed to forego “special privileges” writ large that set them aside from other ethnic minorities in Burma. Privately, Campagnac continued to advocate for assistance on behalf of Anglo-Burmans. He felt that he had to explain why he and other members were justified in their concerns regarding language:

This has been a grievous blow to the community, and has come as a shock to those who participated in the ‘Simla Conference’. The delegates to the Conference had agreed to give up all the statutory protection they enjoyed and to be one with the Burmese people if, inter alia, they were granted the facilities of an education much as was in vogue in the English Schools of the pre-war period. The Hon’ble U Tin Tut undertook to get the Burmese people to implement his promise that what the Conference asked for, would be given. The conference has completely failed as the contractual obligation arising therefrom have not been fulfilled by the majority group in the fundamental matter of education.  

He claimed all were under the impression that there would be some form of English language education. But the Burmese not only failed to live up to their expectations, they did not adequately support the Community. Losing their access to English language education, Campagnac explained, put Anglo-Burmans in a “worsened position,” and “has had a tremendous effect on the morale of the Anglo-Burmans as citizens of the country.” Anglo-Burmans were not going back on the Simla resolutions, they simply felt “that they [had] no hope for a future in

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42CH Campagnac, President of Anglo-Burman Union, confidential note on the present position of the Anglo-Burman Community, Evacuation, Europeans Domiciled in Burma and Anglo-Burmans who moved to India at time of Japanese Occupation and now require financial assistance to come to the UK, 4 September 1947, IOR, Public & Judicial Department 1792-1955, L/PJ/7/13432, British Library, London, United Kingdom.
Burma, since education has been denied to their children.” Because the English language was such an important aspect to the Community’s identity, not being able to have their children brought up in the same tradition meant, “that a great impetus has been given to an already latent desire to emigrate to the Colonies.” He tried to illustrate that, even though Anglo-Burmans had wanted to emigrate earlier, the loss of their access to English language education was the final straw. It was such a crucial aspect to their identity, that living in a country without it was not an option for them.

While many Anglo-Burmans wanted to leave, the emigration question again highlighted the Community’s internal divisions. Campagnac argued that the “attitude of the Anglo-Burmans towards emigration is ‘individual’. It cannot be said that the community as a whole desire to leave the country.” This of course could have been a way to combat the argument that, since the Association agreed to stay in Burma, those that wanted to emigrate were not deserving of assistance. But it aptly illustrates how this Community could not fit into a binary of British or Burman. There were the helpless “poorer classes” who did not have a choice whether to leave or stay due to their means. Then there were “those who have the means to emigrate”, amongst whom, according to Campagnac, “there are some who feel that to take up their roots from this beautiful land and start life in a new world is not justified, at least by the immediate situation here.” Not all Anglo-Burmans, therefore, believed that Burma was a country in which they would not belong.

The purpose of Campagnac’s secret correspondence was to expose the plight of a particular group, one that appeared to be growing as independence loomed. This group felt that “they have lost hope of being profitable citizens of a New Burma and cannot therefore remain

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on, in justice to the land of their birth and to the children for whose future they have a responsibility.”\textsuperscript{44} There was clearly a connection between Anglo-Burmans and Burma. They were not trying to become “European,” but without particular institutions, such as English language schools, they did not know who they would become. In the absence of a language in which they could work, they would not feel like productive members of society. It is interesting to note, however, that he did not refer to Burma as home. Yes, it was the place of their birth, but home was a place where they could speak and study in English.

After illustrating that Anglo-Burmans had not unanimously declined the Simla resolution, he then went on to explain how they were therefore still deserving of assistance. As one of the proponents for the recommendations at Simla, Campagnac did not want to lose his credibility by contradicting what he had declared in 1944. He argued that “There is a grave obligation on the people of the United Kingdom and on the British peoples oversees to shelter this small community of British descent in Burma.” Again, he stressed the connection to the British; while not claiming to be fully European, the British had an obligation to Eurasians because they were partially European. As a way to make his arguments more persuasive, he casually referred to previous arguments for assistance, as though they should be self-explanatory to those reading his letter. As he put it, “It is unnecessary to stress this point, as His Majesty’s Government must be fully aware of the claims of Anglo-Burmans on them through kinship, by state service and lastly by their record of excellent work in the last War.”\textsuperscript{45} In order to add legitimacy to his arguments, Campagnac also added that one of the British Burman associations, the Anglo-Burman Union, recently passed a new resolution, separate from that at Simla in 1944: “The Anglo-Burman Union having been made aware of the existence of a large number of Anglo-Burmans who desire

\textsuperscript{44} C.H. Campagnac, 4 September 1947.

\textsuperscript{45} C.H. Campagnac, 4 September 1947.
to emigrate from Burma, as a result of post-war conditions in this country, considers that H.M.G.
should arrange facilities for their emigration.”

Another common thread in pleas for assistance was that Anglo-Burman livelihoods, or
even lives, would be in danger in independent Burma. For instance, in explaining why his letter
needed to remain confidential, Campagnac claimed that the Burmese Government would not
look favorably upon Anglo-Burmans trying to leave Burma. This government, “composed as it is
of the extreme nationalist elements in Burmese politics” would be angry to learn “that there are a
large number of Anglo-Burmans who do not consider Burma a suitable or safe place to live in
and so would like assistance to go abroad.” He claimed that, if the Burmese found out about his
letter and those from other Anglo-Burmans, it “would invite unfortunate repercussions on the
community as a whole and on Anglo-Burmans who decide to remain in the country, in

particularly.” They could not remain in Burma because they could not be Burmese, the English
language was too important to their identity. And they would not be safe, because they did not
align with the nationalistic sentiments dominating the Burmese Government at the time, which
were distinctly anti-British.

Associated with language were employment concerns. Many felt that they would be
unable to maintain their use of English, and still retain employment in the Union of Burma. As
former civil servants explained, they were raised in European settings and went to English
language schools. According to Eric Alexander Franklin, an Anglo-Burman civil servant under
the British administration, “Burmese was not spoken in our household and, when I appeared for
the I.C.S. [India Civil Service] examination, I took French as a second language. Owing to the
fact that we did not speak Burmese at home, I had to study Burmese as an I.C.S. probationer at

Cambridge University, and I managed to pass my departmental examination in Burmese.”48 His mother was an Anglo-Burman and he was raised in the same tradition that she had been, speaking only English. He had to learn Burmese later in life, and seems never to have been particularly good at it. Other Anglo-Burmans mention that their degrees had been taken in English.49 The focus of these discussions often centered on their upbringing, that it was European, even though they were raised in Burma. Another civil servant, Mr. P.R.H. Molloy, explained that, “My tradition, upbringing and education has been wholly European. My outlook and way of living is European.” In addition to being raised in a European household, he also married a British woman, and the two of them maintained a European-style home. Most importantly, he stressed that he valued his “British nationality and would not surrender it under any circumstances.”50 Being partly European, being raised speaking and studying English, and maintaining their British nationality all formed crucial aspects of their identities. And the new independent Burmese government, they felt, would make them choose a life that pushed these aspects of their identities aside – something that, as Molloy pointed out, some of them were unwilling to do.

There were some who believed they could stay in independent Burma while retaining their European manners and customs. A former British Civil Servant and Anglo-Burman, Theobald Philip Fetherstonhaugh Fforde, claimed that “the effect of the Foreigner’s Registration Act [is that] your memorialist had to choose between continued service under the Government of


50 Memorial of Mr. P.R.H. Molloy, 1947.
Burma and retaining British Nationality.”⁵¹ He wanted to retain his British nationality, but also to remain in Burma. As an Anglo-Burman, he felt such a situation was reasonable, seeing as he did not want to choose between the two differing cultures. Yet because he retained his British nationality, he was unqualified for work with the Government of the Union of Burma. Therefore, he had to resign. However, as Fforde put it candidly, “owing to his failure in 1947 to appreciate his true position now finds himself without employment and without sufficient means to support himself, his wife, and his four young children.”⁵² By deciding to retain his British citizenship, he was unable to find employment in his country of birth.

Other Anglo-Burmans found themselves in similarly difficult positions. Franklin explained that he was unable to obtain the level of Burmese language fluency necessary to retain his employment in government service. He claimed that the Burmese government, upon independence, would name Burmese the official language, “both written and spoken.” He then went on to explain that

    I have made several efforts to improve my knowledge of Burmese, including attending special classes while I was in Simla, I have, owing to my upbringing, found myself unable to achieve that high standard which would be necessary to enable me to do my work efficiently in Burmese.⁵³

He found himself at odds with how the Burmese were constructing society around him. He did not even feel that he could even “record depositions and write judgements in a language in which I am unable to think, and I fear that I have now reached the age when I cannot obtain any higher proficiency in this language.”⁵⁴ Burmese was not his native language, regardless that he was born

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⁵¹ He referred to himself in the third person.


⁵³ Eric Alexander Franklin to Sir Hubert Elvin Rance, 18 August 1947.

⁵⁴ Eric Alexander Franklin to Sir Hubert Elvin Rance, 18 August 1947.
and raised in Burma. This inability to include Burmese language into his identity led him to believe that he would not be able to maintain employment in the new Union of Burma.

Many Anglo-Burmans trying to leave Burma argued that because these changes were out of their control, they deserved financial assistance to emigrate to a British-controlled territory. E.A. Franklin believed that he fulfilled the criteria for assistance. He argued that it “was through circumstances beyond my control that I am unable to work efficiently in Burmese. It is, moreover, through no fault of mine that I was born of an English father and brought up in the English tradition.” He was raised as an Anglo-Burman in a European household that used English as its primary means of communication. This was not his choice; it was because British colonialism brought about a situation in which British men and Burmese women married and raised families. Therefore, it was the responsibility of the British Government, due to his and his wife’s “birth, our upbringing and our loyalties” that they should not be “placed in a position where in any event we are likely to find that the retention of that nationality would place me at a serious disadvantage in a career in Government service in Burma.”

His identity, and loyalty to the British, he believed, put him in a precarious position with regards to his future. He also believed, even though he did not consider himself to be entirely British, that he deserved to be compensated at the same rates as Europeans, largely because he was raised in European customs, raised by his British father to live in that tradition, and needed the commensurate compensation to support that lifestyle. He again stressed that these changes were not because of his own actions by stating that he deserved this compensation because, “through no fault of mine, I have legitimate cause for anxiety about my future in Government service in Burma, and that the necessary directions may kindly be issued.”

55 Eric Alexander Franklin to Sir Hubert Elvin Rance, 18 August 1947.
56 Eric Alexander Franklin to Sir Hubert Elvin Rance, 18 August 1947.
This did not mean that Anglo-Burmans were not sensitives to the reasons that Burmese nationalists had insisted upon independence. As Molloy explained, while he still felt he would be out of place in the Union of Burma based on his attachment to the English language, it did not mean that he did “not sympathize with the Burmese in their desire for freedom and independence.”\textsuperscript{57} Burma was his home and he could understand why nationalists desperately wanted independence from the British. While he understood why the Burmese wanted their independence, however, he felt he could not help them in “administering an independent Burma.” He drew attention in his letter to how his “temperament and outlook” as a European would not be of much help to the Burmese. He could not pretend to be someone he was not. And if he retained his British manners and habits, continuing to work as he had been trained, as a European subject, he would naturally clash with the new nationalistic Government to which he did not feel much affinity. As he put it, “The reasons which make the continued service of European officers unacceptable to the Burmese Government will in fact operate.”\textsuperscript{58} Franklin also argued that he would be would not be able to serve Burma and deny his loyalty to the British. While Burma and Britain had an amiable relationship at the time, there could be a time in the future when “Britain and Burma will be at cross purposes and my natural loyalty to Britain may prove to be a dis-service to Burma.” He also felt that, even if there were no problems to arise between the Burmese and the British, his loyalty to the British would ruin his career in the Burmese government.\textsuperscript{59} He could not succeed because he was not Burmese, he was Anglo-Burmese, and had no intention of changing.

\textsuperscript{57} Memorial of Mr. P.R.H. Molloy, 1947.

\textsuperscript{58} Memorial of Mr. P.R.H. Molloy, 1947.

\textsuperscript{59} Memorial of Mr. P.R.H. Molloy, 1947.
P.R.H. Molloy of the Burma Civil Service tried to use the language of anxiety and home
to make the British understand why he deserved assistance. He felt it important to state that he
was being quite honest, and that he was genuinely anxious about his future in Burma. As he put
it, “These difficulties are real and cannot be ignored or overcome even with the best will in the
world and I trust that they are of sufficient gravity to convince Your Excellency that they
constitute a legitimate cause for anxiety about my future in the Service…”60 He explained that
his family had already moved to England, so he would not become a dependent on the state. But
he also stressed that Britain was his “spiritual home” and he wanted to return to Britain to raise
his children and find a new career.61 Here Molloy made himself stand out against other Anglo-
Burmans; the other letters did not name England as “home.” Being raised in the British tradition
meant, for him, that he would be better suited to living in Britain rather than Burma. Yet all
Anglo-Burmans requesting assistance to emigrate agreed on one thing: Burma would no longer
be home for them once independence was granted.

In Fear for Their Lives

In trying to navigate their confusing and complicated position in a decolonizing emergent nation,
some believed their lives would be in danger if they stayed on in the Union of Burma. Other
minority populations had faced similar situations. Britons or British sympathizers in the Irish
Free State received many threats that caused them to try and emigrate—even though they did not
actually suffer physical violence.62 Threats of this kind also played an important role for Anglo-

60 Memorial of Mr. P.R.H. Molloy, 1947.

61 Memorial of Mr. P.R.H. Molloy, 1947.

Burmans. Not only were some struggling to convince the British they belonged in Britain, they were struggling to feel safe in the country they were raised. Neville Charles Hill, former District Superintendent of Police, wrote extensively about his concerns that he would be in danger if he stayed. While he acknowledged that some might not believe that his anxieties were legitimate, he had plenty of evidence to support them. And if that evidence was not sufficient, at the bare minimum, he argued that he qualified for assistance as an Anglo-Burman civil service officer looking to be relocated elsewhere in the Empire. But as he reiterated many times, the Burmese believed that he had willfully executed a Burmese nationalist—in his role as police superintendent—as an agent of the British Crown during World War II. However, the British believed that one particular nationalist, Thakin Net Pe, “and his followers, richly deserved their fate”. These nationalists allegedly fought alongside the Japanese and killed British soldiers, “but the Burmese attitude was the reverse. They felt that Thakin Net Pe, rightly or wrongly, was fighting for the liberty of his country.”

Hill, following instructions from his superiors executed them as the British began reoccupying the country. As a result, nationalist newspapers had berated him, stirring up public anger against him. The most recent attack occurred in 1948, three years after the incident itself, and he believed they would not stop. He believed that as a result, he would be unable to find future employment in the country, and therefore needed assistance to relocate elsewhere.

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64 Charles Nevill, 1948.

65 Charles Nevill, 1948.
The assassination of Aung San and all members of the incoming Cabinet save one on
July 19th, 1947 did little to calm the fears of the Anglo-Burmans. If anything, they were
amplified. As Hill wrote to Governor Rance: “If the leaders of the country could be disposed of,
I stand little chance of survival, if my memorial falls in the wrong hands.” If they were willing
to kill the “Father of Burmese independence,” what would they do to a non-Burman whom they
believed had wronged them? As ethnicity became increasingly politicized in the lead up to
independence, Anglo-Burmans felt it less likely that they could stay in the country they were
born and raised in. Hill believed that the very existence of his application for assistance divulged
to the Ministry for which worked for and “who will be the future Government of Burma, that
[he] entertained no sentiments of patriotism to impel [him] to serve on under them.” He
described such actions were tantamount “to asking a lamb to submit its grievances against and
through the wolf, who is in a position to devour it.” Even if Hill was willing to look at
employment elsewhere, he was still at a serious disadvantage because of his ethnicity. He argued
that his “mixed descent will militate against me in securing another job, particularly in the
Colonies.” Not being entirely of a single ethnicity, he felt was going to work against him in the
future. His only option was to “start farming which will be impossible without sufficient
capital.” As things got worse for Hill, even his friends suggested he leave for his own safety.
He wrote to Rance that one of his Burmese friends told him not to stay in Burma, for he feared
he would be “victimized.” The “‘Thakins’ were waiting for the day when they could have their
revenge on” him.

66 Charles Nevill, 1948.
67 Charles Nevill, 1948.
68 Charles Nevill, 1948.
69 Charles Nevill, 1948.
Anglo-Burmans seeking assistance also had to produce appropriate British credentials, leaving them feeling as though they had to audition in order to get help leaving a place that was actively trying to force them out. Hill felt it necessary to list for the Governor his accomplishments as a civil servant, including 15 years of service, seven mentions in the “Annual Police Administration Report for outstanding work,” being put up for “the Burma Police Medal in 1941,” volunteering for “service in the 7th Burma Rifles,” and being “recognized by His Excellency, Sir Reginald Hugh Dorman-Smith, who presented me with a certificate of Honour for ‘Loyal, devoted and resolute service in 1942.'” He also illustrated his bravery by discussing how he “did [his] duty to the last and risked [his] life in saving the lives of thousands of Indian evacuees in the Gangaw valley.” He had remained loyal and “helped to maintain British prestige at a most difficult time.” While he felt uncomfortable bragging about himself in that manner, he felt it was necessary to establish particular identity traits, such as excellence at work and loyalty. He stressed that he had done his duty as a British Officer. In addition to being deserving of assistance, he was supporting his mother and two sisters. His future ruined in Burma, he implored the Governor to take into consideration everything he had done at Britain’s greatest time of need. He stressed that he had not failed Britain and at his greatest time of need, he would hope Britain would not fail him and let him be “abandoned” to his enemies. He was struggling because he was not Burmese, but not being British either put him in a precarious position.

As the looming reality of Burmese independence became clear, more and more complaints surfaced from individual Anglo-Burmans concerning their treatment in the colony. They also requested assistance to emigrate to other countries that remained under British protection. In order to gain sympathy for their cause, the authors of such complaints colorfully

70 Charles Nevill, 1948.

71 Charles Nevill, 1948.
emphasized their affinity with the British. Although there were several different manifestations of British Burman citizenship at this time, pleas for assistance managed to convince certain British officials who began imploring the government in London on the behalf of a community for which they believed they were responsible.

**Domicile or Blood?**

As many Anglo-Burmans continued to vie for assistance to emigrate to the United Kingdom or Australia, some British officials pushed back, arguing that Anglo-Burmans were not British and therefore should not be treated as such. Domicile played an important role during arguments against treating the Community as Britishers. Decolonization and Burmese independence forced people to pick sides, not allowing Anglo-Burmans to be British in Burma or Britain. This left Anglo-Burmans feeling confused and abandoned. Whereas before, their shared cultural attributes and partial European heritage earned them inclusion as a “Britisher,” the new understandings of who was “really” British excluded them. Some felt that the assistance schemes were never meant to help people emigrate to the United Kingdom. Instead they were designed to support those who had already immigrated. Others maintained they had absolved themselves of their responsibility for assisting Anglo-Burmans by assigning the task to the local governments. As Archibald Brockway, MP for Eton and Slough, argued to the House of Commons in 1954, “the Union of Burma decided not to introduce any scheme of compensation and the War Damage Claims Commission in Rangoon was disbanded.”

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72 Miss M. Dowie, manuscript letter to the Private secretary to the President of the Board of Trade, “The Union Jack Group of Overseas Britons in Burma and their Sympathisers,” 30 June, 1953, FO, 371/111998, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom.

responsibility of the British Government. These detractors claimed they never implied the British should take responsibility of compensating Anglo-Burmans. According to this view, the other financial assistance schemes were never meant to be for Anglo-Burmans, because they were not from the United Kingdom. These schemes were only intended to give assistance to British subjects who had established a domicile in Britain before the war, not to compensate British Burmans for war loses. They were not British and therefore did not deserve assistance to relocate to a place they had never belonged.

Domicile was a key factor in determining immigration status for many Britons. They became increasingly frustrated that not everyone agreed with their understandings of the assistance schemes. Those that prized domicile over citizenship argued that although applicants and their sympathizers consistently used the term “repatriation,” this was an inaccurate description of the Anglo-Burman case. British Burmans moving to the United Kingdom were not returning, they were relocating. Their European ancestry and British upbringing was not significant. Anglo-Burmans were not from Britain because they had been raised and established their domicile in Burma. It was daunting for some when they read notices concerning assisting Anglo-Burmans to return to the United Kingdom. They felt the distinction needed to be emphasized: These schemes were not for Anglo-Burmans because Anglo-Burmans were not returning home. The notion of Britain being a “Spiritual” home was not sufficient.

Increased numbers of non-white immigrants shaped the debate about Anglo-Burmans. They wanted to make it clear that only those from Britain could come back because they were incapable of handling so many immigrants. Thus, they ignored Anglo-Burman claims to British

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74 Unknown to A. Fenner Brockway, 23 February 1954.

75 Unknown, manuscript letter to Mr. Iddon, 28 October 1954, FO, 371/123374, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom.
advantages. It was not that every Anglo-Burman was not a citizen, it was that they felt if they were to encourage British Burman immigration, it would overwhelm these schemes.\textsuperscript{76} These Britons were not unsympathetic to those in difficult situations. They were not opposed to interpreting “destitution” to allow for some relief to be distributed to Anglo-Burmans, but it should be limited to people who could clearly establish they had come from the UK and they had no other options.\textsuperscript{77} Again, the Community’s claims to kinship and blood relations did not matter. Even if they were destitute but they did not come from Britain, they were not of Britain, and could not lay claim to assisted immigration.

By this argument, it was not the responsibility of Her Majesty’s Government to take care of a population that was in existence as a direct consequence of British colonization. Others, however, were already doing what they could for Anglo-Burmans. As some in the Foreign Office argued, the British Government had

\begin{quote}
already been pleased to sanction arrangements whereby British subjects who derive British nationality from the United Kingdom and who find themselves in straitened circumstances in Burma, may be repatriated to the United Kingdom or sent to a part of the Commonwealth at the public expense.\textsuperscript{78}
\end{quote}

There was a caveat: they not only agreed to repay the funds eventually, but the funds could only be applied to members of the Anglo-Burman community that had maintained connections with the United Kingdom or another part of the British Commonwealth. They feared, as did many others, that Eurasians would become wards of the state – that is, dependent upon the government

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\item \textsuperscript{76} F.A.K. Harrison, manuscript letter to Mr. Iddon, 3 November 1954, FO, 371/123374, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom.
\item \textsuperscript{77} Unknown, to R.L. Speaight Esq., 23 February 1955.
\item \textsuperscript{78} Foreign Office, manuscript letter to the Treasury, Evacuation, Europeans Domiciled in Burma and Anglo-Burmans who moved to India at time of Japanese Occupation and now require financial assistance to come to the UK, 18 May 1948, IOR, Public & Judicial Department 1792-1955, L/PJ/7/13432, British Library, London, United Kingdom.
\end{itemize}
for maintenance – once they arrived. These Britons also added that it was to be “expected that a large proportion of the Anglo-Burman community [would] have no such ties.” Not having connections in Britain meant British Burmans were separate and different from Britons raised in the United Kingdom.

Another type of exclusionary language in the assisted passage applications designed to discourage Anglo-Burmans from applying was to stress that the Community might be overreacting. Before rushing to panic, Eurasians were advised to give the new independent country a chance. They argued that the Anglo-Burman community should not jump to evacuating immediately. There was no possible way to instantaneously evacuate them, in any case. Rather, they should try to give living in independent Burma a try. Others suggested delaying financial assistance for at least six months. This way, “would-be emigrants from this country may be sure that their desire to leave is based on actual experience of life in independent Burma and not on ‘panic.’” They wanted to delay assistance so they could collect information from Eurasians who had relocated to the United Kingdom, Australia, or New Zealand on their experiences. They were convinced stories from Eurasians that had already emigrated would deter immigration due to complaints about climate and job prospects. As Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, claimed in 1948, “Anglo-Burmans will be happier in the land of their birth, Burma, and have a better chance of getting a livelihood, in spite of changed conditions, than in a totally strange country and climate.”

79 Foreign Office to Treasury, 18 May 1948.
80 Foreign Office to Treasury, 18 May 1948.
In order to bolster the argument, he added that, seeing as the Anglo-Burman leaders at Simla had “publicly agreed to throw in their lot with the Burmese,” all members should follow their lead. Therefore, he concluded, emigration would not be encouraged, and assistance would not be given unless the applicant was in a dire situation.\textsuperscript{82} Bevin believed that it was in the best interest to dissuade them from leaving their birth place and moving to a country that was so vastly different with regards to climate, food, and living situations from what they were accustomed to. The attributes of language and habits did not matter in this situation. He feared that most Anglo-Burmans between ages six and sixteen were determined to leave Burma, but they should be deterred as much as possible.\textsuperscript{83} Others simply did not believe that their hardships were as bad as they were making out. Scott, while largely a sympathizer for the Anglo-Burman community, also felt the Community was overreacting and might fare better in Burma than in the United Kingdom. He pointed out that some Anglo-Burmans had to be evacuated during the Japanese invasion and that around 9,000 did get to India; but there had also been some that stayed behind. Scott felt that the latter could “pass” as Burmese as their skin tone was not as light as others, and could therefore survive in Burmese society, whereas more “British”—that is, whiter—Anglo-Burmans would not.\textsuperscript{84}

To support their claims that Anglo-Burmans did not belong, some Britons asserted that those who came, often left quickly. In particular, they stressed the difference in climate. It did not matter that many Eurasians lived in a European style in Burma; the simple fact that they had not been raised in Britain meant they would not be suited to the different climate. Early in the

\textsuperscript{82} Ernest Bevin to British Embassy, 18 March 1948.

\textsuperscript{83} Ernest Bevin to British Embassy, 18 March 1948.

\textsuperscript{84} Unknown, manuscript letter to Sir Robert Heathie Scott, Singapore, Encloses copies of notes on Anglo-Burmans and the Problems of Claimants to British Nationality in Burma, 1956, FO 371/123374, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom.
planning of assistance for Anglo-Burmans, some had heard rumors that a large number of those that had already moved to the United Kingdom were already making plans to return to Burma. As a few officers in the Foreign office argued, Eurasians did not fare well in Britain. They could not acclimate to the climate and living conditions, and they found they could not find work. British Burmans were different, no matter what the community said to the contrary. The proof for many was the fact Anglo-Burmans experienced difficulty in repaying the money they had been advanced for the move. Officials contended that this meant “there are reasons for thinking, in some cases at any rate, that they are putting their heads together to evade payment.”

Eurasians struggled to find employment, which played a role in their inability to pay back the money they borrowed from the government. Evading payments, however, was also a way to accuse the Community of being criminal. Stories like these were not helpful to the Anglo-Burmans who wanted to emigrate to the UK. Officials stressed that the United Kingdom would not be paradise that so many Eurasians believed it would be. Again, this was bolstered by the claim—without any proof—that many of those who had already emigrated “have asked to be sent back or have made their own way back because conditions, both climatic and other, are not what they expected or could cope with.”

While the British could live in Asia, Asians did not have the strength to live in Britain. They were also incapable of competing with Europeans for employment. As some officials reasoned, there were no jobs for the older Eurasians, and the younger ones would not have the correct

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85 Sir JWO Davidson, manuscript letter to The Foreign office, 19 August 1948, IOR, Public & Judicial Department 1792-1955, L/PJ/7/13432, British Library, London, United Kingdom.

86 Mr. McCracken, Mr. Rowland, Mr. Iddon, Mr. Baxter, to the High Commissioners in India and Pakistan, London, 15 February 1954, FO, 371/123374, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom.
qualifications for the types of employment they sought. Not being qualified in Britain for the sort of jobs they had held in Burma was also a way of pointing out that Anglo-Burmans were not British. To make matters worse, according to some, the fact that Anglo-Burmans were “unemployable” meant that they were relying on social welfare resources to survive. Not only would Anglo-Burmans not be able to adjust to life in the United Kingdom because they were not truly British, they were also not the type of people British wanted to immigrate.

Many in Britain were unsettled by the amount of people coming from the colonies or former colonies in the two decades following World War II. While figures are difficult to ascertain because Commonwealth migrants entered as citizens, it is estimated that by 1961 there were between 40,000 and 50,000 non-white immigrants in the UK, most of whom came after 1945. Britons also feared that these immigrants were unemployed and living off the state. They were concerned that, without employment, immigrants would become criminals and eventually housed in British prisons. Criminality was also the mark of a “bad citizen,” therefore not deserving of British assistance. Because of this, some Britons continually looked for reasons to deny assistance to immigrants. They argued that, based on the definition of ‘citizen,’ it meant that those “who are not of European blood” were able to come to the United Kingdom. They also dismissed Anglo-Burman applicants as lazy and likely to become dependents of the state.

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88 Mr. Iddon to D.J. Trevelyan, 15 February 1954.

89 Hansen, 65.


92 Mr. McCracken, Mr. Rowland, Mr. Iddon, Mr. Baxter to the High Commissioners in India and Pakistan, 15 February 1954.
was a key factor in determining who would integrate well and who would not. Anglo-Burmans stranded in India and Pakistan after Burmese independence looking to leave were placed in limbo unless those reviewing applications for assistance reevaluated their position on the place of non-white immigrants in British society.\textsuperscript{93}

**Anglo-Burman Sympathizers**

While many Anglo-Burmans struggled to gain access to assisted passage out of independent Burma, there were quite a few British officials sympathetic with their cause. These officials recognized that even though a number of Anglo-Burmans kept their British nationality, under the Burma Independence Act of 1947 they also became Burmese nationals. This meant they were not necessarily entitled to British assistance. Because they were Burmese citizens, they were not viewed as having no other option than moving to the United Kingdom. However, those sympathetic to Anglo-Burmans in fear for their future argued that they should not withhold assistance on the technicalities of the language of assisted passage schemes. There were some in Britain who believed the Anglo-Burman community deserved assistance, because this community was British. In fact, some believed that they were “under clear obligation to make some provision for [the Community’s] future welfare.”\textsuperscript{94}

While some believed domicile should be considered when determining citizenship, it did not play a major role for everyone. Other Britons believed they should be more sympathetic to the difficult position applicants were in. For instance, they should approve applications for those whose income made it improbable for them to live at a reasonable level of subsistence “for a

\textsuperscript{93} Treasury Chambers, manuscript letter to Mr. Iddon, 28 April 1954, FO, 371/123374, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom.

\textsuperscript{94} Foreign Office, to the Treasury, 18 May 1948.
British subject in that country.” To these officials, Anglo-Burmans were British, therefore they deserved assistance, regardless of their domicile. And if there were “any children likely to suffer by low subsistence or lack of education,” that should make officials even more sympathetic to their cause. British children should not be subject to suffering because they had some Asian blood. The idea of trying to repatriate only those in the most desperate of financial circumstances seemed counterintuitive to these officials. So instead of creating a self-fulfilling prophecy, officials more sensitive to the Anglo-Burman cause believed that it was better to repatriate someone who had some income, rather than waiting until they were completely destitute and unable to financially assist in their own repatriation. Then the rest would be repaid over time.95 Allowing them to come to the United Kingdom before they were completely destitute would help stem the flow of immigrants that became dependent on the state. Anglo-Burman sympathizers wanted to make sure that the children concerned could be educated in English, a significant aspect of identity for both the Community and the British.

Some Britons found the fact that so many were against helping the Anglo-Burman community difficult to swallow. Detractors continued to emphasize that Anglo-Burmans needed to have employment arranged in the United Kingdom or whichever Commonwealth country they were going to prior to receiving any assistance. These sympathizers understood this point of view and they agreed that it would be good for the Community to find employment first, “for the very reason that it is not easy for them to maintain themselves and to settle down here.” They added, however, that the situation in Burma was not good for the Community. And if it continued to get worse, then they should do what they could to find something suitable for them.

in another Commonwealth country. The Community was still British even though their sympathizers admitted that they did not want Anglo-Burmans immigrating without any way for them to support themselves. At the same time, they did not believe that the Community should be abandoned in impossible situations.

Rather than seeing the Eurasian community as the problem, some asserted that the issues lay with the schemes themselves. For instance, in 1954 the British High Commissioner to India, Sir Alexander Clutterbuck, was dismayed that so many British officials believed Eurasians—both Anglo-Indians and Anglo-Burmans—did not acclimate well in Great Britain. This did not necessarily mean there was some deficiency with the Eurasian community. Rather, Clutterbuck believed their lack of ability to acclimate demonstrated a “defective administration.” He believed that the problem could be resolved by make sure all regulations laid out in the assistance schemes were followed. Immigrants should not be left to figure everything out on their own. He added that the government should add a progressively diminishing quota system if they wanted to reduce expenditure. Rather than placing the blame on the Eurasian community for not assimilating, the fault was with the British administration. Therefore, the idea of rejecting them before they arrived was criminal. The reviewers of applications needed to make sure the applicant was British enough to assimilate, reducing the possibility that he would be unable to find employment.

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In order to garner more compassion for Anglo-Burman assisted passage schemes, sympathetic officials tried to “lighten” the blow to make government-paid fare more palatable. In particular, they wanted to assure the naysayers that people who would not adjust to life in Britain would not be given assistance to immigrate. Assisted passage would not be a grant; rather, this was a means to provide money in advance to help them travel and “enable these people to lead useful lives.” Those screening the applications also promised to do their best to dissuade anyone they felt be unable to acclimate to Britain. The applications they felt were most common, however, were those from people who had been employed by British or American organizations. These people had clearly demonstrated that they were capable of working in English-speaking environments. The new independent Burmese state created many problems for this population. They were being forced out of their positions. Because they were able to acclimate to British society, they should not be forced to live in a country where they would not be able retain employment. So long as the applicant was British “enough” to survive in the United Kingdom, they would be less likely to become a ward of the state. To sympathizers, Anglo-Burmans were British, but they still had to prove they were British “enough”.

Supporters had another way of trying to help assuage the fears of some Britons. They tried to reassure the naysayers that assisted passage schemes would not be a general immigration proposal. They were not suggesting that the Government move towards officially sponsored emigration schemes for all Anglo-Burmans. No one wanted the entire Community coming to the United Kingdom. What these officials wanted their peers to consider was whether they could also ask the Australian and New Zealand Governments to contemplate expanding their immigration programs to help families leave a country where they no longer felt they belonged.

This way, the burden would not only fall on the British.\(^99\) If they distributed the immigrants among the three countries, they thought, there would not be a great financial burden on any one.

Many also recognized that Community members were not only British nationals, they shared many cultural traits with Britons that should ensure inclusion in post-World War II Great Britain. Anglo-Burmans held a privileged position under the British in Burma due to their “strong loyalty, as a community, to the British connexions [\textit{sic.}], to the fact that, using English as their mother tongue, they had a much better command of it than most Burmese, and (in many cases) to their greater energy and ability.” They lived as if they were British. These officials also spoke of the use of English as the Community’s “mother” tongue, likening Anglo-Burmans to the British family. The Anglo-Burman lifestyle was extremely British. They lived in towns, rather than in the countryside where most Burmese lived. They were also employed by the government or British firms, working for European rather than Burmese employers. Some even argued that a few became important and influential businessmen and civil servants, while the rest were content as lower level employees.\(^{100}\) In many ways they lived as though they were British. These officers were not trying to argue that Anglo-Burmans wanted to be considered equal, which became clear by when they mentioned that most Community members were happy in lower level positions. Even with their more dynamic identities, some Britons felt the Anglo-Burman community shared many traits that made them similar to the British.

At the same time, there were some non-sympathizers arguing that, since the leaders of the Anglo-Burman Union had publicly announced that the Community would abandon claims to British privileges and align themselves with the Burmese back in 1944, those applying for


\(^{100}\) Unknown to Sir Robert Heatlie Scott, 1956.
assistance were not entitled to it. The Community’s sympathizers, on the other hand, argued that this promise was made with certain expectations from the Burmese. Moreover, the those at Simla did not speak for all Anglo-Burmans. Yet these expectations were ignored. The direction of the new Burma, they felt, had veered away from where Anglo-Burmans had been led to believe it would go. And the new government had not taken the recommendations from Simla into account. First and foremost, Burma left the Commonwealth entirely, when the Community was under the impression that they would be independent but still members of the Commonwealth. Additionally, contrary to promises from the Burmese, English language schools were abolished. And conflicting with Burmese promises, they had been “consistently discriminated against in selection for appointments.” Younger Anglo-Burmans were having a difficult time finding employment, because the government was choosing Burmans and nationalists from the ethnic minorities for posts that the Eurasians formerly filled. The Community also, could not find positions in the military, even if they were fluent in Burmese.  

A former British Civil Servant, Sir Robert Heatlie Scott, stated bluntly that “independence…destroyed the basis of the community’s existence” in Burma. Without the British in control, Anglo-Burmans struggled to understand their place. With independence, therefore, came drastic splits in the Community. There were those gave up their British names and way of life to live as the Burmese. Then there were other who claimed Burmese nationality but retained their British names and European ways of life. Others retained their British identity, but remained in Burma for employment, family, or had yet to make arrangements to leave. And lastly, there were those who left Burma altogether. Those that were in Burma, but could not find

101 The British Embassy to Ernest Bevin, 1948.
a way out, deserved British help. They were in a country they found foreign and felt insecure in.\textsuperscript{102} Scott tied Anglo-Burmans closely with their nationality and domicile. But habits were significant as well, considering most retained British habits and customs.

While there were those that argued against helping Anglo-Burmans immigrate because they could not survive in the United Kingdom, there were others that felt—due to the discrimination the Community was facing in independent Burma—they should not be left to drown. Officials felt they should be diligent in their search for fraudulent claims of discrimination, even saying that there were apprehensive that claims of discrimination were genuine. Others, however, argued that the volume of claims from Anglo-Burmans who had “lost their jobs through language difficulties, or by reason of retaining their British nationality” were sufficient for the group as a whole to be classified as “very exceptional cases.”\textsuperscript{103} The detractors seemed to want to believe the Anglo-Burmans claims of discrimination and fears for their futures were either exaggerated or flat out lies. But their supporters felt it important to take these claims seriously.

British sympathizers also stressed that it was not because of any personal failings on their part that the Anglo-Burman community were struggling to survive in either Burma or the United Kingdom. Rather, it was due to the fact that they had lost so much during World War II. Scott argued that there were still “a few thousand members of this community [Eurasians] who [were] Christian in religion, attached to the United Kingdom by ties of blood, British in up-bringing, language and ways of thought and of whom probably at least 50% will retain their British nationality.” These Community members embodied all that it was to be British. They shared not only blood, but significant cultural traits, such as religion and language. Due to their losses

\textsuperscript{102} Unknown to Sir Robert Heatlie Scott, 1956.

\textsuperscript{103} The British Embassy to Ernest Bevin, 1948.
during the War, however, a much greater number of members than there were before the war were left “indigent.” While this problem related to both Anglo-Indians as well as Anglo-Burmans, this particular MP felt the situation in Burma was much worse, and therefore deserved greater attention. He felt that the Anglo-Burman Community was hit much harder by the war, largely due to the fact that they had to evacuate as well as the fact that Burma was a stage of the war. What made matters worse was the fact that there were many more organizations in India for the Anglo-Indian community than there were for Anglo-Burmans in India or Burma. Anglo-Burmans’ exceptional war record also deserved consideration when deciding on assistance.  

Additionally, losses incurred by Anglo-Burmans were acknowledged to be through no fault of their own. Australian religious leaders recognized the precarious position Anglo-Burmans were placed in after independence. Some wanted to help the Anglo-Burman community find financial assistance to emigrate from Burma, arguing that this community needed assistance. When Burma left the British Empire in 1948, many Anglo-Burmans were unable to emigrate due to their financial situation. They found “themselves, through no fault of their own, in dire distress.” They also contended that these British Burmans “without exception” never wavered in their loyalty to the British, “most of them having served in some one capacity or other in the British Armed Forces during World War II.” This reasoning held that the Community was even more deserving of assistance because of everything they had done during the War. Due to the fact that many lost everything, they were in an “utterly wretched fate.”  

Many Britons saw the Community as victims who had ties to the British—they put their lives on

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104 The British Embassy to Ernest Bevin, 1948.

the line for the United Kingdom—therefore, they needed help getting out of a foreign country that was becoming a dangerous place for them.

Nevertheless, although Eurasian sympathizers recognized the many similarities the community shared with the British, there were also undeniable differences. Many Anglo-Burmans found it very difficult to pass as white. They were “not generally ‘accepted’ in British society in Rangoon or permitted to join ‘white’ clubs.” In smaller towns, those boundaries were more permeable, and many Anglo-Burmans lived as completely British people. Relations between the Anglo-Burmans and the British were also “normally close and cordial.” But it was not quite the same between Anglo-Burmans and Burmese. The relationship between the two groups varied widely, but Britons assumed Anglo-Burmans keeping to themselves. Sympathizers clearly did not agree with the fact that they were not included, as use of the quotation marks around the word “accepted” illustrates. Most Anglo-Burmans were better suited for British culture, more so than they were for Burmese; hence they kept to themselves among the Burmese. Many also addressed the sad reality that it was not only in Burma that the Community faced this discrimination. Because they were not entirely European, they faced many problems in the Great Britain. For instance, while the Ministry of Labour was doing everything they could to find employment for the members of the Community who immigrated to the United Kingdom, they met “with difficulties, e.g. colour prejudice, etc.” Although they were British, they were simultaneously not white, which was an important distinction for many British employers. A group of officials hoped some government departments would give Eurasians

\[106\] Unknown to Sir Robert Heatlie Scott, 1956.
employment opportunities, because it was clear that the Community lived in a limbo that left them constantly insecure.¹⁰⁷

One thing Anglo-Burman sympathizers understood was how complicated the Anglo-Burman identity was, and how closely it was tied to issues of legitimacy. Unfortunately, in order to be officially classed as an Anglo-Burman, their British fathers needed to recognize them as their legitimate children, which many did not do. This created problems for Anglo-Burmans after independence. Initially, any child born out of wedlock in Burma was illegitimate; however, in 1949, HM Government amended the Christian Marriage Act of 1872 to allow children to be legitimated by the subsequent marriage of their parents, so long as the mother was not already married to another man. This act did enable many to claim British citizenship, but there were still many other hurdles to jump through on the way to claiming British nationality. These cases of legitimacy needed to pass through the British Government, which screened them thoroughly. The Government insisted it was necessary to “established that the father of the child born illegitimate [possessed] Burma domicile. If the father…had United Kingdom domicile, then the child [had] to be legitimated under the British Legitimacy Act of 1926.”¹⁰⁸ Legitimacy was fluid and could be molded to fit the needs at the time. But it left the Community in a state of constant insecurity.

Even with this change, it could still be difficult to claim British nationality. After the British left, the Community needed to decide if they were going to be Burmese or British. Those who had “derived their British nationality solely from Burma lost it.” For those who decided to retain their British nationality, they needed to prove they deserved it. Therefore, they needed to “to prove birth…of (legitimate) descent from a father or paternal grandfather born in British


¹⁰⁸ Unknown to Sir Robert Heatlie Scott, 1956.
territory other than Burma.” While there were exceptions made for those in Burma that were incapable of obtaining Burmese nationality—namely Indians and Anglo-Indians—it still left many scrambling to prove who they were. Scott believed that those most affected were Anglo-Burmans, whose fathers often times left Burma without officially marrying their mothers.¹⁰⁹ Even if they were of mixed European and Asian descent, without their fathers or grandfathers acknowledging that they were in fact members of their families, some British Burmans were left in a state of limbo. Because the Burmese had completely separated from the United Kingdom—something which the Anglo-Burman community advocated against—a critical part of their identity was being stripped away from them. Unfortunately, few Anglo-Burmans had birth certificates after Japanese occupation. Therefore, those looking to “claim British nationality found it exceedingly difficult to establish their claim.” Although some documents had been sent to London, it was just a matter of trying to find them¹¹⁰. The community struggled to prove their identity as British much more than before. While previously, Anglo-Burmans had constantly been able to demonstrate their British credentials through shared habits and language, they now needed to prove the basic at a basic level that they had British blood.

To make matters worse, those who had gained British naturalization prior to independence, for instance Anglo-Indians who became Anglo-Burmans, “lost all claim to British nationality.” Initially this policy also meant that the children of naturalized fathers were stripped of the privilege, but this was later overturned. Because of this, the children of naturalized fathers—but not the fathers themselves—were British citizens.¹¹¹ This left many Anglo-Burmans

¹⁰⁹ Unknown to Sir Robert Heatlie Scott, 1956.
¹¹⁰ Unknown to Sir Robert Heatlie Scott, 1956.
¹¹¹ Unknown to Sir Robert Heatlie Scott, 1956.
in difficult positions. Their children were able to leave the country, while the parents remained in a situation they detested. One family found itself living outside of Burma while their father was trapped in the country. The father tried to get a British passport, but because his naturalization was revoked, only his children could leave. Both his father and grandfather had been born in Burma, so even though he had European heritage in his paternal line, only his children qualified for British passports. Rules and regulations put in place to try and clarify who was Burmese and who was British after decolonization left many Anglo-Burmans in limbo, unsure of where exactly they stood.112

To aggravate the situation further, many members of the community were “the offspring, or descendants of the offspring of unions between British men and Burmese women, which were valid according to local customs but were not legal marriages.” Unfortunately, it meant that they were illegitimate according to British laws. After independence, therefore, they had no claim to British citizenship, even though many of them were in fact raised as though they were European by their European fathers. There were sympathizers who fought to help this Community find solutions. And in October 1949—at least for a short period of time—the British created other avenues for Anglo-Burmans to gain access to British citizenship. The requirements for evidence proving legitimacy from a father or paternal grandfather born in a British territory were weakened, and new guidelines were created. They could now provide Certificates of Baptism that specified the names of both parents. This would prove both parents were married before the child was baptized. Or they could also use baptism certificates from the father or paternal grandfather. But unfortunately, about a year later, the passports issued were to be revoked. But

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among the Anglo-Burman sympathizers in the government, their cases were treated with sympathy, and some could keep their passports. Ideas of legitimacy varied among the British, Burmese, and Anglo-Burmans. On their Burmese side, Anglo-Burmans were perfectly legitimate, but on the British side, they were not. Nonetheless it was the British side they were hoping to align with. Both the British and the Anglo-Burmans had various understandings of what—or who—should be counted as British or not British. As this chapter has made clear, this put Anglo-Burmans looking to leave Burma in a difficult place.

**Avenues of Identity**

It seemed once Burma became an independent country, some Anglo-Burmans had to prove their connection to Great Britain more than ever. As they were applying for assistance to leave Burma, officials explained that the term “‘United Kingdom British Subject’ is…interpreted in relation to the circumstances of applicants at the material time…It is therefore necessary that for applicants not born in the United Kingdom to establish what precisely are their connections with the United Kingdom.” This meant that they needed to “trace and prove their ancestry through the male line to someone born in the United Kingdom.” They needed to prove their connection to the British yet again.

There was a widespread perception that Anglo-Burmans were telling different stories at different times because of the changing circumstances. As far as some Britons were concerned, as before the Simla conference, British Burmans leaned more towards their British heritage. After independence, Anglo-Burmans were forced to make major decisions regarding their

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113 Unknown to Sir Robert Heatlie Scott, 1956.
futures. Were they to be Burmese, as the leaders at the Simla conference claimed they would? Or would they be British? To some, the majority of Eurasians in Burma “went Burmese.” Those making such assumptions admitted that they did not have any figures to support their claims, but they estimated that about 8,000 Anglo-Burmans had Burmanized. These assumptions could be a way to assure officials that assisted passage schemes would not mean all Anglo-Burmans would be applying. Those that “went Burmese”, however, only did so after the British left. During the colonial period, they claimed that it was economically and socially advantageous to claim British affiliation during colonization. In fact, it was so advantageous that there were Burmans with no British blood claiming to be Anglo-Burman to share in the advantages. Because this group of Anglo-Burmans were only claiming connections with the British for societal advantages, when the British left, they “naturally reverted to being Burmese.” This population, according to some, had mostly Burmese blood. This reversal, therefore, was only natural. These British Burmans “found European habits uncongenial.” Not all Anglo-Burmans shared their love of their British heritage as others did. Some also believed that this group of Anglo-Burmans, feeling it necessary to demonstrate their loyalty—or due to “a latent bitterness against their fathers’ people”—over-asserted a sense of Burmese nationalism.115 According to this view, Anglo-Burman understandings of themselves were significantly malleable at their core.

Another perception of Anglo-Burmans in independent Burma was that they were Eurasians who took Burmese nationality but kept their British names and lifestyle. This group was estimated to be much smaller, but again there were no official figures. This population mostly consisted of officials in government or public service who wanted to keep their jobs. But, according to some, taking British nationality was only to keep their employment as long as they

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115 Unknown to Sir Robert Heatlie Scott, 1956.
could. In actuality, they “took care to establish their claim to British nationality, with a view to asserting it either when they retired, or sooner if things did not work out happily.” They were feigning their Burmese nationality until they could reassert their British identity further. Not everyone in this population, however, was struggling with the new government. In fact, some had even “been outstandingly successful. For instance, [James Barrington] was for five years Burmese Ambassador to Washington and Permanent Representative at the United Nations and is now the Permanent Head of the Burmese Foreign Office; others [held] high positions in the armed forces.” But this could not be said for everyone. There were many in this group that were struggling, as others unable to let go of their British heritage had struggled in the new Burma. Scott believed many Anglo-Burmans “found that they could not adjust themselves to the new dispensation, either because of language difficulties…or because of the general lowering of standards and efficiency to a point where they felt they could no longer bear to carry on.” Even though they attempted to find a viable place in the new Burma, the British aspects of their identity were undeniable. One of the most important features of their community, as mentioned before, was the ability to educate their children in English language schools. In fact, Scott believed some “decided that they could not keep their children in a country where they could no longer be educated in their English mother-tongue.” Their “mother” tongue was a critical point. Even though most were born and raised in Burma, there was a familial connection with the English language, with their English heritage. In addition to not being able to relinquish their attachment to the English language, they also could not “conceal that their loyalty to the new government was not whole-hearted.”

To Scott, this segment of the Anglo-Burman population struggled trying to realign themselves in the new Burma.

Scott’s third perception of Anglo-Burmans were as that they were more rooted in their British nationality. These Eurasians denied their Burmese nationality but remained in Burma, which made them “aliens in the land of their birth.” At their core they were British, not Burmese. This group was in a particularly difficult spot, since they were not trying to conceal their loyalty to a foreign country. They were discriminated against with regards to employment. Scott argued that the “Union Government [refused], not unnaturally, to employ aliens in their own service.” The Burmese, of course, wanted to employ people loyal to the Union. But it meant that the Anglo-Burmans who did not identify as Burmese were struggling in a land a job in a country they felt was foreign. This group also struggled to find employment elsewhere in the country because the government had put pressure on private enterprises to hire Burmese nationals. Meaning jobs available to Eurasians, Scott believed, were “trickling away.” Due to their destitution, some applied “to renounce their British nationality,” but being subjects and not citizens meant they were unable to do so. Others put in applications to be repatriated in the United Kingdom, feeling they would fare much better in an English-speaking country. While not all in this group were struggling, Scott believed that sooner or later, they all would.\footnote{Unknown to Sir Robert Heatlie Scott, 1956.} He was not arguing that this group was being persecuted, as some descriptions of them did. But their nationality put them at odds in the country of their birth.

Lastly, there were those who left Burma. Scott estimated this group was around 8,000. However, only about 500 of them needed special assistance to travel to the United Kingdom. Twenty-seven used funds to move to Australia and New Zealand, twenty-three moved to India, and fourteen to Borneo. Those that traveled to the United Kingdom, according to Scott, found
employment quite easily—contrary to what many British officials feared would happen.

However, many of them found

much to complain of in Britain, - the cold, the want of servants (it was a very poor Anglo-Burman family that could not afford at least one servant before the war), the small, crowded houses, and the comparative insignificance of the jobs they have to take, compared to the more responsible positions they were used to filling in Burma. A few of the weaker ones failed to adapt themselves, and returned to Burma.\(^\text{118}\)

So, although they claimed to be more British than Burmese, and could not live in an independent Burma, they were not British enough to acclimate fully to Britain. There were those that felt they would fare better in Australia, but many came into direct conflict with the White Australia policy.\(^\text{119}\) Australian immigration authorities were willing to consider “applicants who had ‘75% European appearance, background and learning.’” However, over time they “reverted to permitting immigration of non-Asiatic persons only.” Australians argued that the shift had “become necessary because of the large number of visas granted in Ceylon.”\(^\text{120}\) While they resembled the British in their speech and habits, the color of their skin betrayed them. Regardless of how some tried, the Anglo-Burman community could not fit into the binary identities demanded by decolonization. Scott believed they were unable to find a place in Britain because they were not truly British. They were outsiders and it left them unable to find suitable lives outside of Burma. Because of this, Scott believed the best course of action, although “though a difficult and distasteful one” would be to discourage any further Anglo-Burmans to emigrate from Burma. He believed it would be best for them to “regard themselves as Asians with British blood” and to demonstrate their loyalty to the Burmese.\(^\text{121}\) There was a distinction between being

\(^{118}\) Unknown to Sir Robert Heatlie Scott, 1956.

\(^{119}\) Unknown to Sir Robert Heatlie Scott, 1956.

\(^{120}\) Reverend George West to Mr. D. Tonkin, 27 July 1965.

\(^{121}\) Unknown to Sir Robert Heatlie Scott, 1956.
British with Asian blood and being Asian with British blood, which manifested itself in nationality and habits. There was no simple solution to the conundrum facing Anglo-Burmans. But what was clear, at least to some, was that they were not suited for England. The complexities of their population made them a difficult group to deal with, and Scott felt the best way forward would be to let Burma find a place for Anglo-Burmans.

While some felt that the Anglo-Burman community needed to make a go of things in Burma because they were not suited to live in other places, many in the Community disagreed. As they had immediately after Simla, they used their history in service, habits, and customs to justify British assistance. For instance, a group of Anglo-Burmans that went by the name of The Union Jack Group of Overseas Britons in Burma argued that their service during both World Wars had been forgotten. They claimed that “the whole Anglo-Burman Community, the majority of whom are now Burmese Citizens, rendered loyal services to the British Crown quite out of proportion to their numbers in both World Wars I and II.” They were also implying that this was something that the Burmese had not done, setting themselves above the Burmese. The Anglo-Burman community also claimed that they were “an asset to the Commonwealth & Empire in its times of grave danger.” These qualities, they felt, gave them the right to at least be made aware of schemes to help people emigrate from Burma. This group argued, however, that certain assisted passage schemes had been deliberately shielded from the Anglo-Burman community, an injustice that they could not understand. As they had mentioned in the past, they laid their lives on the line for the British, and could not believe the way they had been treated since.122 They consistently felt that, due to their complex ethnic identities, they were being ignored so that

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122 Allan Knight, manuscript letter to Mr. Peter Thorneycorct M.P, President of the Board of Trade, “The Union Jack Group of Overseas Britons in Burma and Their Sympathizers,” 19 May 1953, FO, 371/111998, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom.
officials could exclude the Community from schemes that would enable them to travel to the United Kingdom.

Skin color, and by association, blood, played an important role in Anglo-Burman understandings of where they belonged after Burmese independence. In attempting to explain why those wanting to leave Burma deserved to come to the United Kingdom, petitioners discussed the ways in which their community had been discriminated against by the British throughout the colonial era. By denying Eurasians the ability to come to the United Kingdom, it was “yet another instance of the ‘Whites’ not losing an opportunity of impressing upon us the difference in the quality of their ‘blood’ as compared with ours, and the difference in treatment we must expect.”\(^{123}\) Anglo-Burmans were frustrated and felt the categories of “whites” and “blood” were arbitrary distinctions and should not be used to justify discrimination. As Eurasians, they were of course not viewed as European. And they did not try to argue that they were. Because they had Asian blood rather than purely European blood, the British discriminated against them. Many in the community were also angered when people claimed Anglo-Burmans would be better off in Burma, when they considered themselves British. As Edith Moment explained to the Prime Minister, it was because Burma had decided to leave the British Commonwealth that she felt that she needed to leave. She claimed that she found it “quite impossible to identify [herself] with the Burmese in language, dress, manners, mode of living and religion.” Most importantly, she ardently claimed, “I am not prepared to forfeit my birthright – my status as a British subject.”\(^{124}\) She could not understand why people would ask her and her


\(^{124}\) Mrs. Edith M. Moment, manuscript letter to Mr. Attlee Prime Minister, 14 November 1947, “Evacuation, Europeans Domiciled in Burma and Anglo-Burmans who moved to India at time of Japanese Occupation and now require financial assistance to come to the UK,” IOR, Public & Judicial Department 1792-1955, L/PJ/7/13432, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom.
children to take on an identity so foreign to them. Her and her daughters were British, not Burmese, and they felt that being a British subject was their right by blood.

A major point of contention for the Community was that, while they did not have entirely European blood, they did not believe it was grounds for discrimination. They described themselves as “persons smarting in indignation on account of the unwarranted disparative treatment.” But they felt that the discrimination was unwarranted because they were fellow Britishers who were unfortunate in that in the natural course of marriage and the vocations of our forefathers, we happen to have been born out East, but who nevertheless, by that quaint trick which British blood plays, makes us in the last resort BRITONS TOO.125

Being considered British was important to many Anglo-Burmans, but their place of birth was out of their control. It was up to the purely European to determine how much blood made one British. Some members of the Community felt, however, that they were in fact British due to the amount of European blood they had, as well as their cultural attributes that connected them. National identity was more than just blood. Therefore, they asked that they “be dealt with in conformity with the recognised principles of BRITISH JUSTICE.”126 This was an appeal to be included in schemes to help citizens of the United Kingdom relocate to the British controlled territories. These authors were attempting not only to elicit sympathy and help, they were attempting to illustrate that could not be pigeonholed.

Blood was not the only attribute that made Anglo-Burmans British. In their eyes, their habits and customs were more similar to Europeans than the Burmese. Some of the people who drafted schemes of assistance for Anglo-Burmans to emigrate tried to make sure that only those in truly destitute situations would be eligible. However, others argued that this course of action

125 Undersigned British Subjects to Mr. A. Fenner Brockway, 22 January 1954.

126 Undersigned British Subjects to Mr. A. Fenner Brockway, 22 January 1954.
would be counterproductive. Instead of waiting for them to become insolvent, they should instead reserve assistance for those capable of acclimating to a different country and had the resources to do so. Those that they felt could not acclimate but could not find a place in the new Burma, however, posed a complicated problem that they did not have a solution for. While not all Anglo-Burmans would fit into this category, those that not only shared British blood, but also enough cultural attributes that they could survive in the United Kingdom should be allowed to immigrate. Not all Anglo-Burmans were alike, and the British struggled with how best to support them. If they were to be British, they needed to be able to acclimate to the United Kingdom.

These complexities and the absence of solutions, however, did not stop Anglo-Burmans from continuing their pleas for assistance. Edith Moment, a single mother, implored the Prime Minister to give her assistance so she could “live and support [her] girls, till their education is completed.” She wanted to be able to give her children “a chance to make good in a newer and better atmosphere.” The atmosphere in Burma had gotten to a place where her Anglo-Burman family could not survive. The cultural differences were too great. Anglo-Burmans found that success required Burmese language fluency. Therefore, education for all children between 6 and 17 was to be in Burmese. Because of this, it would not have been possible Moment’s children to continue their education in English, or even get a job after they finished their education. They were under the impression that they would only be tolerated if they became Burmese, which they could not do. She firmly believed she was more British than Burmese, and was incapable of relinquishing her British identity. British officials understood that, to many Anglo-Burmans, although Burma was their home, they were “very proud of their Western standards of life and

127 Unknown to Sir Robert Heatlie Scott, 1956.

128 Mrs. Edith M. Moment to Mr. Attlee Prime Minister, 14 November 1947.
simply [did] not want their children to become Burmese.” For those that held on to English language education as a staple of their identity, they could not become Burmese. Their language, religion, customs, and ways of thought made them “Occidentals” not suitable for life in independent Burma. Over all they were “intensely proud of being British.”

In addition to sharing the use of the English language, Anglo-Burmans highlighted their commitment to British ideas such as justice to demonstrate their British affinity. Much like middle class West Indians in the 1950s, they “had intertwined ideas of respectability with the ‘treasures of justice, mercy, and freedom…into an interpretation of Britishness that they used to create a place or themselves in the British imperial world.” The Union Jack Group argued that Anglo-Burmans were “brought up in the British tradition and with notions of British justice and fair play.” They not only spoke the same language, they shared important ideals. Many felt that the British had failed to live up to these ideas. Anglo-Burmans were surprised that, even though they had to “abandon everything and go through the horrors of flight from the country,” as well as the bravery they showed defending the “Commonwealth & Empire in two World Wars,” their “existence has apparently been forgotten or ignored.”

Anglo-Burmans were the ones upholding British ideals, rather than Britons. Eurasians, therefore, were acting more British than the British.

For those looking to leave Burma, they genuinely felt they were more British than Burmese, making living in independent Burma more and more difficult. In other places, where colonizers had occupied for several generations, the gap between Eurasians and Europeans, some

129 The British Embassy to Ernest Bevin, 18 March 1948.
131 Allan Knight to Mr. Peter Thorneyorct, 19 May 1953.
argued, was substantial. This was not the case in Burma, where “connections with the United Kingdom [were] not remote.” The Union Jack Group felt that there were two different categories of Anglo-Burman families due to the strong connections with the United Kingdom. First, there were British subjects who were “Citizens of the United Kingdom & the Colonies.” Then there were Burmese citizens. These Anglo-Burmans had a British mother, but the children were Burmese. Or they might have one brother that identified Burmese and the other as British, due to their choices after independence.132 Because it was an integral part of their identity, even among those that were Burmese, they still had connections to the British. It is interesting to note that those connections did not seem to go the other way. All families were connected to the British, but not all were connected to the Burmese, even if they were living in Burma. Moment, for example, ardently stressed how she was more British than Burmese. She explained that all of her British connections were on her father’s and late husband’s sides. After her husband was killed in service to the British during WWII, she was stranded in India, and she did not feel she could reestablish her family farm in independent Burma. She became even more concerned for her family when the government in India stopped subsidizing her children’s English language education.133 Everything about her leaned decidedly more to her British heritage. While she tried to make a go of things in India, once she could no longer educate her daughters in English, it was no longer possible to live in Burma or India.

The idea of “home” also played a critical role in the lives of post-independence Anglo-Burmans. A group of Anglo-Burmans struggling to explain why they deserved assistance emigrating from Burma focused on the distinction between Anglo-Burmans and the Home Born

132 Allan Knight to Mr. Peter Thomeyorcet, 19 May 1953.

133 Sir JWO Davidson, manuscript letter to The Foreign office, 19 August 1948, IOR, Public & Judicial Department 1792-1955, L/PJ/7/13432, British Library, London, United Kingdom.
British. But the use of “Home” when discussing the United Kingdom indicated that they saw home as somewhere different from where they were raised. Home, even if they were not born there, was in Britain. They had the same characteristics of Home Born Britons. They were “respectable, well educated and loyal subjects of Her Majesty.” Yet they were still “distinct and apart from a body of Home Born British who being class-conscious [held] themselves aloof as select.” They saw themselves as from Britain even though they were not born there. But they were still different from those that were born in Britain. Home Born Britons felt they were distinctly above Anglo-Burmans. Both groups felt that the Anglo-Burmans were “kept in ignorance” of assisted passage schemes that were made available to Home Born Britishers. Regardless of their differences, and the fact that Anglo-Burmans were below Home Born Britons, they all felt the act of keeping Eurasians ignorant of programs that could help them leave a situation they could not survive in was wrong.

Although the Home Born Britons sided with the Community in the feeling that Eurasians had been kept in the dark regarding assisted passage schemes, Anglo-Burmans were still very frustrated at how Britons had treated them. They claimed there had “never been any real goodwill towards us from the Home Britishers in Burma.” But they were astonished that, after everything Westerners had learned during World War II about the cost of discrimination, “ill-will would persist and be as strong as before.” This antipathy, they believed, that came from two distinct problems. Firstly, they thought the Home Born Britishers were not happy with the fact that Anglo-Burmans were “the descendants of the United Kingdom’s best blood, of men who came out East in the days when a man’s existence depended on his courage, of men who fought and died in the building up of the then mighty British Empire.” The second issue was how the

134 Undersigned British Subjects to Mr. A. Fenner Brockway, 22 January 1954.
Community embodied British notions of masculinity and courage. This group of Eurasians were frustrated that “hundreds of members of our small community fought and died in World War I and again in World War II,” but they were still treated as less by Home Born Britons. It was important to add that they were volunteers, not conscripts. They willingly went into war to defend the Empire. They fought, not for the Home Born Britishers that discriminated against them, but for their “King and [their] FATHERLAND” And they stressed: “by right of our British Birth, OUR FATHERLAND TOO!” The notion of “home” and “fatherland” were important to the Community.

Masculinity and military service continued to be central to Anglo-Burman conceptions of identity, and they felt under-appreciated by Great Britain for it. Several members of the community felt that the services they rendered in both World Wars “should have constituted some claim to be remembered.” They also “should have contributed to the discontinuance of the dishonourable treatment we were always subjected to.” By emulating British masculine ideals in putting their lives on the line for the empire, they believed they would be treated more equitably. They believed that there was “an evasion of obligations” with regards to their compensation for losses Anglo-Burmans endured during the war. They argued that it was “in short, INJUSTICE.” They had shown they could live up to British notions of masculinity and courage. They had fought for the empire, not for Burmese independence, and lost their lands and possessions in the process. But the British were not offering them the same compensation as they had “whites.”

135 Undersigned British Subjects to Mr. A. Fenner Brockway, 22 January 1954.
136 Undersigned British Subjects to Mr. A. Fenner Brockway, 22 January 1954.
Others believed their service had earned them a reward of some kind. While the government had publicly acknowledged the efforts of the Kachins and the Karens through an award of £37,500, no such offers had been made to British Burmans. And while their service was different to that of the Kachins and Karens, British Burmans believed that “there would seem to be a logical justification for making some sort of grant in recognition of the war services of the Anglo-Burmese community.”\(^{137}\) They were positioning themselves beyond the binary of white and non-white. Anglo-Burmans prided themselves on their military service. They had worked with the British to defend Burma during the war. But the British rewarded the Kachins and Karens over British Burmans. While they were arguing that they held the same traits as the British, they were also comparing themselves to local Asian groups in Burma. Their notions of masculinity were more in line with the British, but it seemed that the British did not feel the same way.

No matter how ardently they stressed the significance of their cultural affiliations, British officials continued to focus on blood and domicile. They urged those applying for assistance to prove that they were “a citizen of the U.K. of pure European blood.” Or, if they were not pure Europeans, “the applicant must be a citizen of the U.K. deriving citizenship wholly or largely by birth or naturalisation, or descent from persons born or naturalised in the U.K. or Eire.”\(^{138}\) Those looking for assisted passage, therefore, needed to lay out their British ancestry. Mr. Gyi, an Anglo-Burman looking for government-paid fare had a difficult time with this, mainly because his British heritage came from his mother’s side of the family, not his father’s.\(^{139}\) Unfortunately,

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\(^{137}\) The British Embassy to Ernest Bevin, 18 March 1948.


\(^{139}\) This is also the reason for his Burmese rather than English name.
according the Government of India Act, Anglo-Burmans were anyone with Asian heritage in their maternal line and British heritage in their paternal family line. Therefore, Gyi was not an Anglo-Burman. Yet he tried to illustrate how he was a member of the Community for all intents and purposes. Ambassador Minto at the British Embassy in Rangoon stated to Sir Anthony Eden of the Foreign Office—on behalf of Mr. Gyi—that although Gyi’s father was Burmese, he had an English mother. And he was born in the United Kingdom. It was not until 1946 that his father brought him to Burma, without his mother. So, he did not know much about her at all.  

However, just because he grew up with his Burmese father did not mean that he did not share the cultural traits that would enable him to claim the Anglo-Burman identity. According to Eden, although he was “born of a Burmese father Mr. Gyi is essentially English in appearance and manner.” Additionally, Gyi was “an intelligent young man who should have no difficulty in adjusting himself to service life.” He demonstrated British habits. He looked and acted British, giving him the proper qualifications for inclusion into the Anglo-Burman community.

Anglo-Burmans also felt that the mistreatments they experienced prior to independence, rather than being resolved, were compounded in the post-colonial era. As mentioned earlier, the Community felt that certain assisted passage schemes were concealed from them. They argued that the previously well publicized schemes were “scrapped all together” without informing the Eurasian community. Rather than transferring the applications from previous schemes to the newer ones, they were tossed aside and ignored. Some members of the Community suspected that there was “a conspiracy, the object of which was to confine benefits to only those United Kingdom British subjects born and brought up in the U.K. of course.” They believed that if any


141 Ambassador G.A. Minto to Sir Anthony Eden, 8 January 1955.
“Oversees British subjects,” including Anglo-Burmans, were to put in a claim, they would not have been informed that “the new schemes [were] only for those born in the U.K.” Their identities automatically disqualified them for particular schemes, and they did not appreciate how it was handled. The lack of respect was frustrating. But they felt it was handled this way in order to investigate claims with the “satisfactory knowledge that on the whole there would be but few such claims from these ‘outsiders.’” While these were suspicions which were difficult to prove, they felt that “the cunning way in which all information has been kept from us” left them with little else to believe.¹⁴²

Edith Moment also felt the British had let her down in post-war era. She detailed how she had lost everything during the war. She revealed how the Japanese suspected her and her husband of “concealing infiltrating troops, our house and grounds surrendered and searched.” They were then “ordered into a concentration camp, with several others,” where they were forced into small huts with “no proper food and insufficient clothing.” Allied troops were also bombing the airstrip near the camp where they were being held. This made their living conditions even worse. Her family lived in their “tiny four-foot leaky trench, ankle deep in water, with only an occasional emerging [sic.] for food and fresh air.” One day, a shell landed next to their hut, injuring her husband so badly, that he died from his wounds. When the survivors finally managed to escape, they lived in constant fear of being recaptured by the Japanese. They ran for “four hours…barefooted, bareheaded, panting for breath,” until they came across a Chinese-American camp. She explained that, having lost her “husband, [her] home and all else of value in that country, over a year ago,” she appealed to the British Burman Government for assistance immigrating to Canada. She had family there so she would not have become a ward on the state.

¹⁴² Allan Knight to A. Fenner Brockway, 22 January 1954.
But she was informed that her request could not be fulfilled because there was no official scheme to help Anglo-Burmans emigrate to Canada. In that case, she asked for assistance to London where she would work out her own passage to Canada and was once again denied. She felt as if her needs were being ignored and claimed that all “Anglo-Burmans, who could pay their way to the U.K., Australia or New Zealand have done.” And anyone that could get assistance had received it. Now there were only those that had been denied help left. But there was nothing left to give her and her family, that had already “suffered the loss of so much in the Burma War.” Yet according to the authorities, she was not British “enough” to deserve the same level of assistance that others had obtained.

Some felt their mistreatment was even greater because part of their heritage was Asian; that the Rangoon Consul-General’s “unwarrantable treatment” of keeping assisted passage schemes from them was done intentionally to humiliate and hurt them. They considered themselves British, so such treatment highlighted the ways in which the British had discriminated against them for decades. They hoped that by bringing such grievances to the attention of the Foreign Office, it would put them in the “right spirit of human understanding” to understand their grievances and to “advocate” on their behalf to correct the wrongs committed against them. These Anglo-Burmans felt that they were victims of circumstances beyond their control. The mistreatment they felt was comparable to how people were treated in the caste system in India. They also likened the ways they were treated differently to the Home Born Britishers to the ways different castes were separated socially, such as “the Muhammedan is

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143 Mrs. Edith M. Moment to Mr. Attlee Prime Minister, 14 November 1947.
144 Mrs. Edith M. Moment to Mr. Attlee Prime Minister, 14 November 1947.
145 Undersigned British Subjects to Mr. A. Fenner Brockway, 22 January 1954.
from the Hindu.” These caste distinctions existed before British colonization and were based upon local custom. The British had also based their justification for taking over the administration of India on the injustice of the caste system. So how, then, could they justify their mistreatment of Anglo-Burmans?

Honor also played a critical role for Anglo-Burmans seeking assistance out of Burma. When they felt that the British had betrayed them, it was an insult they could not ignore. The way an Anglo-Burman, Allan Knight, was treated in 1953 was a useful example. Knight had pleaded with the Board of Trade for extended deadlines to submit applications for the new assisted passage schemes. His reasoning was that the Anglo-Burman community had not been made aware of these plans and therefore did not have the time needed to submit their applications. However, the response from the Board of Trade was not what the Community expected. These officials claimed—regarding the initial schemes—that they had taken “appropriate steps to give United Kingdom British subjects in Burma an opportunity of knowing about the Extended Chattels Scheme and the Burma Grant Scheme.” And seeing that “over 4500 applications were received by the Board of Trade during the three years the Schemes were in operation,” which included the names of the Anglo-Burmans looking to extend the new deadlines, they did not feel that they had short-changed anyone. They argued that the information had been communicated to the Anglo-Burman Associations and Unions, with the expectations that those bodies would then disseminate the information to its members. Additionally, a copy was also posted “on the Consular Notice Board to the British Embassy in Rangoon.” They concluded that they would not be able to reopen the schemes.

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146 Undersigned British Subjects to Mr. A. Fenner Brockway, 22 January 1954.
This angered members of the Anglo-Burman community looking for assistance from the British, who emphatically argued, “HONOUR – BROKEN! Here is an example of the meanest type of WHITE BRITISH CLASS DISTINCTION AND DIFFERENTIATION.” These community members felt that “appropriate steps” were by no means taken. If they had taken such measures, they would have listed them in their letter. British Burmans argued that “They have not stated why no press announcement was made, but have remained discreetly silent.” The sentiment was that Europeans were treating Anglo-Burmans as inferior because of their skin color, forcing them to stay in a place that did not feel like their home. To be treated so poorly by a community that Eurasians felt such affinity to make them feel as though the “honor” they were raised to believe was an important aspect of British identity had been a lie. However, there were some British officials that felt these claims were exaggerated. They felt the argument that many Home Born Britishers knew of the schemes whereas Anglo-Burmans did not was not accurate. Rather, they argued that “a number of these ‘many’ persons gained knowledge of the Schemes and of their closure after they reached the United Kingdom, where discrimination is evidently not so flagitiously practiced.” Anglo-Burmans, therefore, were overreacting. These fears and anxieties, to British officers, were not coming from a genuine feeling of being left behind. Thus it did not seem to many in the Community that their British attachments mattered much to the Home Born Britishers.

Regardless of the mistreatment Anglo-Burmans felt they had experienced, they refused to let go without a fight. As they put it, even though it was obviously an “endeavor to overcome the breach of principle towards a section of Her Majesty’s subjects,” they believed British officials

147 Undersigned British Subjects to Mr. A. Fenner Brockway, 22 January 1954.

148 Undersigned British Subjects to Mr. A. Fenner Brockway, 22 January 1954.
had made “an attempt at official throthling” by “snubbing [them] into silence.” The history of their attachment to the British community did not matter. It was the British tradition, at every turn, to discriminate against the community. This narrative of grievance was a powerful for members of the community: “‘Injustice’ becomes our middle name.” Even though they were continually the victims of British injustice, and they were frequently not treated with the respect they felt should be afforded, they refused to go away.

**Conclusion**

Shifting ideas of Britishness played a critical role in the Anglo-Burmese identity. In the late 1940s and 1950s, British decolonization and Burmese independence created situations that created new debates about where the Anglo-Burmese belonged. Anglo Burmans were forced to choose to be British or Burmese, driving the British to adapt their ideas of who is British. While citizenship was defined by one’s heritage and domicile, many believed it should also include behaviors and race. Anglo-Burmans had to be “good citizens” in order to be considered British. Many who wished to retain their Britishness set out to defend it through a demonstration of shared cultural, religious, and linguistic characteristics. But the community posed a complicated problem with regards to emigration schemes. Many refused to cease seeking assistance out of a country they did not feel they belonged in, regardless of criticisms from Briton opposed to the Community’s presence in the United Kingdom. These debates highlighted how Eurasians from former colonies should be treated.

One of the reasons some felt compelled to secure their British nationality was because Burmese nationalism had become more exclusionary by the late 1940s. The possibility of civil

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149 Undersigned British Subjects to Mr. A. Fenner Brockway, 22 January 1954.
war between the Burmans and ethnic minorities concerned many Anglo-Burmans. Religion also played a factor in the anxiety of Anglo-Burmans; once the U Nu government took steps to incorporate Buddhism into the public sector in the late 1950s, Christian minorities – including many Anglo-Burmans – became alarmed. Many feared that if the government found out they had asked for assistance from the British, there would be reprisals. Yet some still chose to ignore that risk and returned to asking for assistance from the British to immigrate to another English-speaking part of the British Empire once it became clear that Burma was moving in a direction that left them feeling like aliens in their own homes.
EPILOGUE

It was a Labour Government that awarded Burma complete independence in 1948. As the Labour Party is again in office in the United Kingdom, it is incumbent on Her Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom to take strenuous measures to ameliorate the intense sufferings, severe disabilities and distressing hardships of the Anglo-Indian/Anglo-Burman minority communities who were virtually abandoned to their fate when the white officials were withdrawn from Burma en masse in 1948, and whose present pathetic plight can, it would seem, be placed at your door. Can I therefore count on you to waste no time in carrying out your obligations in this matter which fairly screams to high heaven for immediate attention? ¹

Anglo-Burmans and the British continued to struggle to fit Anglo-Burmans into their understandings of citizenship and nationality in the 1960s. Members of the Community continued to seek financial assistance from the British to relocate; British officials struggled to understand how changing definitions of citizenship applied to Anglo-Burmans. The Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962 also led to increasingly contentious continued debates. Some believed it was time for Britain to focus more on Europe and less on the extended Commonwealth, while others felt the labour from the Commonwealth was critical to the future of Britain. Critics of non-white immigration, and their supporters, quickly came to a consensus that immigration reform was needed, and the Act that introduced immigration quotas from Commonwealth nations quickly passed. ² These restrictions were aimed at unskilled migrants


with no active employment offers in the UK. Therefore, only students, active military personnel, or those with passports issued by the British government were able to easily immigrate.³

Within this shift concerning the acceptance of migration, Anglo-Burmans found themselves continuing to struggle with where they belonged. While Anglo-Burmans applied for emigration assistance throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, the number of applications grew smaller, decreasing the need for debates about Anglo-Burman futures.⁴ Because a census in Burma had not been taken since 1941, it is difficult to know how many British Burmans remained. But the decrease in applications for assistance might be due to a heavily diminished population that remained in Burma. Those who did linger but wanted to emigrate, however, continued their pleas for help into the 1960s.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, some felt that members of the Community did not qualify for assistance because they were no longer British citizens. Some went so far as to accuse Community members of lying on their applications in order to obtain assistance. The applications stated that the subject must have a residence in the UK or have close connections there. The latter criteria were vague and open to interpretation. Yet this wording was used to justify the claim that some British citizens in Burma did not qualify for repatriation. According to an officer of the Asia Department of the Foreign Office in 1967, Anglo-Burmans did not have any ties “with the United Kingdom and [had], in most cases, gained their British nationality by their birth, or that of their father, in former British India.” Again, domicile played an important part in citizenship, or at least should according to some officials. Being British because one’s father was British was not enough for Anglo-Burmans to claim a right to live in the United


⁴ This has left minimal documentation concerning Anglo-Burmans after the early 1950s.
Kingdom. Officials continued to look for any way to discourage Anglo-Burman immigration. For instance, some believed Anglo-Burmans should apply for Indian citizenship rather than British. According to this line of reasoning, many Anglo-Burmans had closer connections to India than to Britain. From the 1950s to this day, Anglo-Burmans have struggled to find where they belonged. Although they shared British blood, some felt they were still not British enough to immigrate to the United Kingdom.5

The Ne Win Coup

In the aftermath of Burmese independence, Anglo-Burmans continued to fear for their future in Burma. Anti-western nationalism became much more extreme. The conflicts between Burmans and the ethnic minorities made many Anglo-Burmans feel they would not have a place in the new country. In particular, many continued to feel that, after everything they had endured during the war, they deserved some help getting out of Burma. As Edith Moment—an Anglo-Burman woman desperately seeking assistance leaving independent Burma—put it, “the alarming political and communal situation” had her and her daughters living in fear. They feared that they would have to relive the horrors they went through during Japanese occupation and their evacuation to India.6 Others feared the end of “law and order in Burma and an outburst of

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6 Mrs. Edith M. Moment, manuscript letter to Mr. Attlee Prime Minister, 14 November 1947, “Evacuation, Europeans Domiciled in Burma and Anglo-Burmans who moved to India at time of Japanese Occupation and now require financial assistance to come to the UK,” India Office Records (hereafter IOR), Public and Judicial Department 1792-1955, L/PJ/7/13432, British Library, London, United Kingdom.
xenophobia and actual violence against Westernized members of their community.”

As nationalists became more outspoken, their language became more xenophobic - mostly against Indians, but also against the British. These nationalists failed to make a distinction between the British and the Anglo-Burmese. Some Anglo-Burmans did not feel they belonged in post-colonial Burma, fearing reprisal from nationalists. In the 1930s, Burmese nationalists had demonstrated they were not averse to using violence against those that did not mold to their ideals. And the actions of those that joined the Japanese during the occupation led many Anglo-Burmans to believe they could expect violent and discriminatory treatment under an independent Burmese government. Intimidation played an important role in changing conceptions of nationality and identity throughout the British Empire. This was nothing new. In the Anglo-Irish community and amongst British sympathizers in the Irish Free State, many felt out of place in the new Irish State and wanted British assistance to emigrate. Large numbers were forced out of their jobs. While Burmans were not physically holding guns to the heads of Anglo-Burmans, forcing them to leave, they were creating situations that made the Anglo-Burman community fear their future in Burma.

The escalating situation in Burma forced British officials to debate the efficacy of extending more assistance to Anglo-Burmans rather than to Anglo-Indians. While there were many Anglo-Indians in similar positions, needing assistance to leave a recently independent country that appeared contrary to their cultural values, some believed they had “greater

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7 Ernest Bevin, MP, Foreign Office, manuscript letter to British Embassy in Rangoon, 18th March 1948, “Evacuation, Europeans Domiciled in Burma and Anglo-Burmans who moved to India at time of Japanese Occupation and now require financial assistance to come to the UK,” BL, IOR/L/PJ/7/13432.


responsibilities for the protection of our nationals [in Burma] – particularly in view of the ultranationalistic policy which the Burmese Government is now pursuing and which” did not have an equivalent in India.\textsuperscript{10} Even third-party officials recognized the genuine threat Burmese nationalism posed to Anglo-Burmans. In particular, it was the European aspects of the Community’s identity that seemed to put them in conflict with Burmese nationalists. While Anglo-Burmans had held a special position in colonial Burma, the Community’s history with and allegiance to the British caused many to argue that they were finding things much more difficult in independent Burma. As Sir Robert Heatlie Scott argued, “Nationalist feelings will tend to discriminate against those who remain if they retain European habits.” Nationalists would naturally want to eliminate the former colonial elements in their government. Things would be even more difficult for those Anglo-Burmans who also chose to retain their British nationality, “as opposed to taking local” identities. Therefore, Scott believed it was important to stay in contact with the leaders of the Anglo-Burman community and to advise them that Anglo-Burmans needed to face the truth and “make the inevitable – and irrevocable – choice between their European and Asian ancestries at the earliest possible moment.” To Scott, the possibilities for more complex identities among the Community, incorporating both of their heritages, were diminishing. For their safety and security, they needed to choose. And they needed to choose quickly. He feared that “Those who [insisted] on postponing the choice and linger on [would] suffer; particularly as they [would] generally be the weakest members of the community.”\textsuperscript{11}


\textsuperscript{11} Unknown, manuscript letter to Sir Robert Heatlie Scott, Singapore, Encloses copies of notes on Anglo-Burmans and the Problems of Claimants to British Nationality in Burma, 1956, FO 371/123374, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom.
Although some officials believed Anglo-Burmans were prematurely panicking about the future of Burma, the Ne Win coup of 1962 seemed to realize the worst of their fears. Since independence, Burma had been plagued by civil conflicts and uprisings. Ethnic minorities across the country felt the Burmans in central Burma controlled the country and kept minorities sidelined despite the agreements Aung San had entertained on their behalf. Exacerbating the tensions, Prime Minister U Nu attempted to bring back many Buddhist elements into the government. These policies aggravated many of the ethnic minorities with particular affiliations—particularly Christians, Muslims, and Communists—and made them want to secede from the Union. These policies also created a rift among the ruling parties, creating more chaos in the country. The people were becoming skeptical about U Nu’s ability to rule.

As the tensions continued to grow, U Nu asked General Ne Win and his army to form a “Caretaker Government.” In 1958, Ne Win took over as Prime Minister until such time as the conflicts in Burma were resolved. Ne Win felt so confident in his running of the country that he decided to run for office in 1960. The military, while also supervising the elections, ran against U Nu’s Pyidaungsu Party, but lost. The new civilian government “seemed ill equipped to deal with the economic and political problems facing the state” according to the military, and consequently, in 1962, Ne Win and his military arrested the leaders of the civilian government and took control of the country. Although the “Caretaker Government” stressed the importance of restoring “law and order” and establishing democracy, Ne Win’s Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) eliminated democracy. During this time “xenophobia became manifest.” The BSPP forced all private foreign aid organizations to leave the country, effectively stranding Anglo-

Burmans in a country without any employment opportunities for them. Once again, the Anglo-
Burmans began looking for assistance to leave Burma.\textsuperscript{13} This time, few believed their lives were not in danger.

Anglo-Burmans looking to leave the country continually stressed how conditions “in
Burma have never been stable after independence”. Military conflicts and political problems with ethnic minorities and with other Burmans made Burma a volatile country in which to live. After the 1962 coup, things became even more worrisome. As one Eurasian claimed, “arrests [were] the order of the day, and persons with Anglicised names [were] discriminated to such an extent that they [were] compelled to leave the country.” Before 1962, the community’s concerns centered on the future economic prospects in the country; after the coup, they became concerned for their personal safety. Those who had access to British passports were able to leave. Unfortunately, not all Anglo-Burmans could obtain them, because not all of them were considered British. And for many of those without passports, many avenues for leaving Burma had disappeared. An Anglo-Burman resident in India during World War II, for instance, was able to receive a British passport. But that person’s father, if he was resident in Burma, could not receive the same.\textsuperscript{14}

The newer, more xenophobic policies put in place by Ne Win also genuinely frightened some members of the Community. The histories of their allegiance to the British put them in a more precarious position. Under the BSPP, Anglo-Burmans needed permission to leave the country, which was often difficult to obtain. For example, Noel Edith Jackson—an Anglo-


\textsuperscript{14} Reverend George West, Harlow Essex, manuscript letter to Mr. D. Tonkin, 27 July 1965, \textit{Plight of Anglo-
Burmans in Burma:- Case of Mrs. Noel Edith Jackson}, FO, 371/180246, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom. This author could not find the exact rule that created such a situation. So, the logistics are still unclear. What is clear is that such a policy was in fact enforced for a number of Anglo-Burmans.
Burman trying to emigrate to Australia—had a permit from the Australian government to immigrate. But she was stuck. The Burmese government refused to give her a permit to leave the country. Australian charitable organizations were frantically trying to find ways around this problem. But under the stricter rules, Ne Win’s government exerted more control and fear over this small community because it did not fit into the restrictive nationalist Burmese identity that became a requirement for survival.

Ne Win also Burmanized the school system further than any previous administration. English language education played a critical role in the Anglo-Burman Community’s security. Under Ne Win, all schools were nationalized, and the primary language of instruction for all levels of education was in Burmese. Thus, the Church schools that many Anglo-Burmans attended in the past were no longer an option. They became, even more than before, foreigners in the country they were born in. Additionally, all “industry and trade [was] nationalized,” meaning Anglo-Burmans, as they feared, could not find work. They had to “exist on savings which [were] now spent and they [were] near destitute.” All the concerns the Community had tried to bring to the attention of British officials in the early days of independence were being realized. Their ties to the British made them stand out as foreigners and put them at risk. While some felt that nationalism in the country was understandable in the immediate aftermath of independence, it meant that there was no place for people with mixed loyalties to the British and Burmese. Even those who, “by the grace of God or thorough sheer good luck, happen to be in decent jobs,” were being squeezed out by Burmese nationalists. This left Anglo-Burmans in “widespread and abject

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poverty coupled with absolutely no future for either the present generation or for the generation unborn.” Ne Win’s government left no room for Eurasians.

It became precarious for Anglo-Burmans to even apply for travel documents from the UK or Australia before they had been issued from the Burmese government. Some Anglo-Burmans, in attempting to flee a country that was run by more extreme nationalists, found they could not obtain the proper documentation. Even their applications for British travel documents were often opened by Burmese government censors. Under this more xenophobic and authoritarian regime, many felt that the only way they could get their applications out without retaliation was to do so under a fake name. Even though using a false name as suspicious, one Anglo-Burman reassured the application’s readers that it was “for reasons of security, because it is a known fact that [his] letter would never leave the G.P.O. since the Censor is sure to open any cover addressed to such a high dignitary [sic].” They were living in fear that the nationalist government would enact reprisals. As this applicant put it, “Democracy is as dead as the Dodo in Burma since the present regime took over just a little more than two years ago!” Due to their fears, many members continually applied for British passports, especially because the Burmese government refused to grant them travel documents, and they wanted to leave. However, some officials feared that, in the act of petitioning the British government for travel documents, they were putting themselves in even more precarious positions with the nationalist government. Although these Anglo-Burmans would have been entitled to British subject passports, it would be in their best interest

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17 Harold L. Walden to the General Secretary for the National Council of Churches, 14 February 1967.
18 Reverend George West to Mr. D. Tonkin, 27 July 1965.
20 Reverend George West to Mr. D. Tonkin, 27 July 1965.
to “retain their Burmese nationality until the last moment. In this way, they [stood] a better chance of staying in employment.”\(^{21}\)

It seemed to many British officials that the Burmese government was retaliating against any Anglo-Burman that demonstrated a stronger allegiance to the British than to the Burmese by refusing travel documents if British ones had also been requested. Again, the Community was being forced into one of two boxes, Burmese or British. But it seemed clear that British officials were convinced that issuing British travel documents was doomed to make the Anglo-Burman situation worse. One official argued that an Anglo-Burman attempting to leave the country might want to travel with documents that carry “no implication of British nationality.” While this would put Anglo-Burmans, again, in the position of having to choose between their Asian and European heritage, this particular official argued that “experience shows that the Burmese authorities would have no hesitation in rejecting [British travel documents] as valid for leaving Burma.”\(^{22}\)

Not all officials were as sympathetic with Anglo-Burman travel predicaments. Some were more concerned about granting British travel documents to people they felt were underserving of them. They wanted to make sure there was a “valid claim to British nationality” before granting any such documents. For instance, one Anglo-Burman wrote to both British and Australian authorities for travel documents in order to immigrate to Australia. A British official responded by saying that, as he was not traveling to the UK, and was not a British subject, he could not have a British passport. But even if the Australians granted him documents, he argued that they would be pointless, since they “would convey no implication of British nationality or of Australian citizenship and the Burmese could insist on treating him as a Burmese national and

\(^{21}\) Reverend George West to Mr. D. Tonkin, 27 July 1965.

\(^{22}\) Reverend George West to Mr. D. Tonkin, 27 July 1965.
impose whatever restrictions they wished on his movements.”23 Anglo-Burmans were a complicated category, often leaving them stranded in a country they were actively trying to flee.

**Anglo-Burmans: Unicorns of the British Empire?**

Anglo-Burmans gradually disappear from the official records in both Great Britain and Burma. Today, there are two major associations for them, neither of which are in Myanmar: The British Burman Society in Cambridge, United Kingdom, and the Australian Anglo-Burmese Society based in Perth. This would seem to indicate that the majority of Anglo-Burmans who were successful in applying for permission to emigrate ended up in Australia and the United Kingdom. One may even hypothesize that well-educated Anglo-Burmans were able to secure positions in higher education whereas those who were not opted for the “lucky country”, a place even in the 1960s associated with economic opportunities for hard workers. According to Nemoto Kei’s interviews with Anglo-Burmans from 2006-2008, however, membership of these groups is dwindling as those who remember the generations that fled Burma fade away.24 As Kei argued, among those who identify as Anglo-Burman, a tension exists regarding who—exactly—they are. Some feel out of place surrounded by white people who do not understand their heritage. They feel that “Being mixed-race is a grey space—you’re neither here nor there creation [sic.], balancing on the border of two communities, never fully integrated in either.” In an article from Rachael Krishna—an Anglo-Burman herself—while her Asian father saw England as the place

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23 Reverend George West to Mr. D. Tonkin, 27 July 1965.

where they succeeded, to her and her siblings, England made them feel like outsiders. Some Eurasians who responded to this article shared Krishna’s sentiments. They were angry that their Asian family members had tried to assimilate rather than embracing their Burmese heritage.

I was unable to find evidence of an Anglo-Burman Community in Myanmar today. The ethnic category was not listed on any of the three censuses taken since independence. When researching in Myanmar, I was unable to find any Burmese language documents about the Community. I recently found reference to the Community being called bo kabya which means a person of mixed, meaning Burmese and European, heritage. The dominant discussions of mixed-race people that I found concerned Indo-Burmans, or people of mixed Indian and Burmese ethnicity. While Nationalists in the 1930s and 1940s believed any racial mixing would ruin the Burmese people, “the chief target of pre-World War II Burmese racism were the offspring of Burmese and Indians—perhaps because Anglo-Burmese (“Eurasians”), being affiliated in a way with Europeans, however subordinate, were not considered such easy targets.” These vocal disdain for mixed race people in Burma could have encouraged Anglo-Burmans that remained in Burma to diminish their mixed-race status. Additionally, when speaking to people in Myanmar, they did not understand what I was trying to research. Finally, I was unable to find reference to bo kabya in contemporary Burmese newspapers. It appears to me


27 Sandra Champagnac-Carney, Burma Memories of WWII (Raleigh: Blue Mist Publications, 2010), 33.

that this designation is no longer used as an identity qualifier. I met people in Myanmar that talked about how they had some European heritage, but they still identified as Burmese.

The Anglo-Burman community came into existence due to the colonization of Burma. While they were offspring of British men and Burmese women before the British conquered, it was under British rule that the Anglo-Indian community was introduced. And when Burma separated from India in 1935, the Community reexamined how they understood their own community. They formed their own space, below Europeans, but above Asians. But these definitions did not come about easily. Anglo-Burmans struggled to define their population legally when they did not fit neatly into easily defined categories. Beyond these legal definitions, Anglo-Burmans formed a unique group that tended to act, dress, and eat more like Europeans, simultaneously owning their Burmese birth and living among Burmans. They worked largely for the government and British-owned businesses. They also defined Anglo-Burman as anyone with partial European and partial Asian ethnicities who was raised in Burma, or entire Europeans that were born and raised in Burma. This self-reflexive examination laid some of the groundwork for reactions to Burmese independence and throughout the 1960s.

The dramatic growth of Burmese Nationalism and World War II also shaped how the Community viewed themselves and their future. Many would eventually seek emigration assistance from the British, a move that shaped by the rise of xenophobic nationalism and consequent fears for their safety. When World War II forced many Anglo-Burmans to evacuate to India with the British Government in exile, they felt even more insecure. Many members reached out to British officials hoping to persuade them to ensure protections if, and when, Burma was granted independence. As this seemed more likely, prominent members of the Community met in Simla in 1944 to determine their future. In what was hoped would be a major turning point for this mixed-race population, they determined it would be in Anglo-Burmans’
best interests to stress their Asian heritage and set aside their European connections. These members iterated the special connection British Burmans had with Burma. They repurposed some of their claims of loyalty to the British, such as their efforts in the war, to illustrate their devotion to their home—Burma.

Many Anglo-Burmans, however, could not make the adjustments laid out at the Simla conference. They continued to seek assistance from the British. While Burma was their home, they could not relinquish the cultural affinities they shared with the British that placed them above the Burmese. Their plights continued well into the 1960s, but with official independence in 1948, the Anglo-Burman community posed a problem to officials. Were these people British because of their European heritage, meaning they would deserve assistance? Or, because they remained in Burma, were they Burmese? The problem was never completely resolved. Those who were fortunate enough to leave have assimilated into their destination cultures; those who remained were not allowed to remember their heritage. Anglo-Burmans, an ethnic group created by British colonialism, have now vanished from the consciousness of their former colonizers and from the land from which they came. Historians cannot afford to do the same.
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