

## The Anglo-Burmese in the 1940s: To become Burmese or not

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### I . A people shadowed by Burmese nationalism

In most of the former colonies of the world, there were found communities consisting of people born of mixed parentage, namely with parents hailing from both the suzerain and indigenous groups. Members of such communities, which existed in the dividing line between the indigenous and non-indigenous people, usually tended to harbor complex bonds of resentment towards the suzerain states, and owing to this they sometimes even played dynamic roles in nationalist movements. For example, in the nineteenth century Spanish colonies of Latin America, one observes that those at the forefront of the independence movements were for the most part local Spanish and *mestizos*. In Southeast Asia too, the core of the local elite who took part in the Anti-Spanish struggle in the late 19th century in the Philippines were *mestizos*. Also, it is interesting to note that the first political group established in 1912 in Dutch East India (Indonesia), and which insisted on independence, consisted of Eurasians (the East India Party).

On the other hand however, the case of those Anglo-Burmese who lived in Burma during the British colonial period was an exception. Those who had been classified as 'Eurasians' or 'Anglo-Burmans' in a legal sense never played a salient role in the political arena. On the contrary, they were swept away into the peripheral sections of society, due to

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the rise of a strong mood of anti-British Burmese nationalism that arose both during the 1920s and later. Inquiring into the history of the Anglo Burmese therefore will not be a task oriented to investigating their role in the independence movement, but rather, to consider a people who were shadowed by the intense light of anti-colonial nationalism.

The Anglo-Burmese in the colonial days were psychologically possessed of a strong attachment to Britain. However, due to the fact that they harbored feelings of superiority towards the indigenous Burmese (who were Buddhists and Burmese speaking), once Burmese nationalism surfaced as a powerful political movement, they began to be viewed with distrust by the Burmese majority. After independence many of the Anglo-Burmese chose to leave Burma and settle abroad the rest of their lives, since the newly independent state urged them to use Burmese as a national language, and even pressured them to change their names to 'Burmese'. Moreover, the political and economic situation after independence was too unstable for them to pursue their daily lives in peaceful manner.

This article is concerned with the manner in which the Anglo-Burmese identified themselves in the 1940s, through their perception of both the people of the suzerain nation and those of the native Burmese (Burmans), with whom they had to share the same type of livelihood. It also on the other hand concerns the issue as to how the two communities realized the features of the Anglo-Burmese. The 1940s in Burma included the period of the Japanese military occupation (1942-45), which for the Anglo-Burmese community was a traumatic experience.

This article seeks to make clear the fact that the community of Anglo-Burmese not only fortified their own identity, but also experienced an increase in their hatred for the native Burmese. This was due to their having experienced the Japanese military administration, since they suffered under the pressure of the Burmese nationalists who had cooperated with Japan. It also seeks to clarify the fact of their dissatisfaction with the post-war British reaction towards Burmese nationalists, since from their own point of view the reaction was too conciliatory. Judging from their perspective, the fact that the post-war British Government had decided to grant full independence to Burma by compromising with the Burmese nationalists represented by Aung San and other pre-war anti-British activists, was something unwelcome. In the final section of this article, some indications will be presented as to how the ordinary Anglo-Burmese now living abroad recall their experiences of the Japanese occupation period and after. This will enable us to clarify their historical understanding of World War II and the independence of Burma.

Since we find only a few preceding studies concerning this topic, the author has concentrated on primary sources available in the collection of the India Office Records at the British Library and Foreign Office Records at the National Archives (ex-Public Records Office) in London, as well as oral surveys that were conducted between 2006 and 2008 in Perth (Australia), Auckland (New Zealand), and London as well as Exeter (UK), where many Anglo-Burmese emigrated after independence.

## II. Who are the Anglo-Burmese?

### *2.1. Legal definition*

The Anglo-Burmese people were legally named ‘Anglo-Burmans’ in the late 1930s, and the lawful definition of the community was described in Clause 13 (1) of the Third Schedule to the Government of Burma Act 1935. It defined an Anglo-Burman as “A person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent, but who is a native of India or Burma”.<sup>(1)</sup>

According to this definition, only the male line was given consideration, and the female line was neglected. For example, a person who was born of a Burmese father and European mother was not classified as Anglo-Burman. Moreover, the male line did not need to include persons of British blood, but rather, persons of any “European descent”. This was the reason why there were found not just British or Irish, but rather German, French, Greek or other European surnames within the Anglo-Burmese community. One could also be “a native of India or Burma”, which meant the community included both Anglo-Indians and Anglo-Burmans. In other words, this community could be defined more accurately as a group comprising of people of European descent in the male line, who had been Anglicized before the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### *2.2. Population*

The population of the Anglo-Burmese community as revealed by the census was very low. The last comprehensive census of 1931 disclosed a figure of 19,200 (with 9,884 males and 9,316 females). The name ‘Eurasian’ was used in this census, since Burma was a province of the Empire of British India up to April 1937. This figure however was no more than 0.13% of the entire population of Burma. They exceeded in numbers the European community (0.08%), but were lesser than the Indians (6.95%) and Chinese (1.32%). After the 1931 census, the latest census in the colonial period was that of 1941, but the figures here were not made available due to the Japanese military invasion. However, tentative figures placed the number of Anglo-Burmese at 22,080, with nearly half residing in Rangoon.<sup>(2)</sup>

Under the Government of Burma Act of 1935 (which came into force in April 1937), the Anglo-Burmese people were granted a measure of security by being allotted three reserved seats in the colonial legislature: two in the Lower House (House of Representatives) and one in the Upper House (Senate). The percentage of allotted seats in the Lower House was 1.5% of the total number while in the Upper House it was 2.8%, with both percentages far exceeding their corresponding values in the 1931 census (which as mentioned above was 0.13%).

### *2.3. Vocational distribution and cultural features*

According to the 1931 census, 23.4% of the Anglo-Burmese worked in the fields of transportation, customs and communication, 20.7% served as school teachers or nurses, 15.6% were employed as government servants (including the Indian Civil Service) and technical employees such as train drivers, 11.9% worked in the field of commerce and

industry and 5.0% served in independent professions. This presents a clear contrast when their vocational distribution is compared with that of the Burmese community, where 70% of the people worked in the field of agriculture. Only 1% of the Anglo-Burmese were peasants, and this gives us a clear image of their community as urban dwellers.

As for their cultural features, there is a typical description by G. Kirkham entitled “A Memorandum of the Anglo-Burman case”. Kirkham was a representative of the Anglo-Burmese community in India during the Japanese occupation period of Burma. Under a situation where nearly half the community had escaped from Burma and taken refuge in India, he had to negotiate the future of his community with the Government of Burma, which had shifted from Rangoon to Simla (India) in May 1942. In this memorandum, which was submitted to the Government of Burma, Kirkham indicated five cultural features of their community<sup>(3)</sup>:

- (1) Though they use both Burmese and English, their *lingua franca* is English.
- (2) They are entirely Christians.
- (3) They are all literate.
- (4) Their customs, ideals and mode of living are British.
- (5) They are people who survive between an inherited European standard of living and an imposed eastern scale of wages.

Of these five features, the first three are indeed objective indications, but the remaining two are rather abstract and subjective. In saying, “Their customs, ideals and mode of living are British,” he meant that although they had to spend their daily lives in a Burmese fashion, yet they never thought it desirable, since they believed the British or European way of life to be better than that of the Burmese. The statement, “(They) survive between an inherited European standard of living and an imposed eastern scale of wages,” reflected their dissatisfaction with regard to the fact that they could not become as rich as the British, even though they were endowed with a consciousness that was psychologically identical to theirs.

### III. The Anglo-Burmese during the Japanese occupation period (1942-45)

#### 3.1. Evacuation from Burma to India

The Japanese armed forces began their full-scale invasion of Burma on January 1942, with the cooperation of the Burma Independence Army (BIA) that had been organized by a Japanese secret organization called the *Minami Kikan*. After the fall of Rangoon in March, Mandalay was also occupied by the Japanese troops in May, and the Japanese military administration was declared in June. The British and Indian Army had to withdraw to India, and the Government of Burma was also forced to shift to Simla, a famous hill station in northwest India, after announcing the cessation of official duties to all the Burmese government servants. Simultaneously however, a large number of Indians and tens of thousands of Anglo-Burmese fled from Burma to various parts of India, but approximately half the number of Anglo-Burmese continued to remain in Burma under Japanese control.

Those Anglo-Burmese people who remained in Burma during the war were dealt with

as citizens of an enemy nation by the Japanese authorities, and besides Dr. Ba Maw's Government also viewed them with distrust, since here Aung San and other pre-war anti-British nationalists cooperated with Japan. They had to survive daily with danger attending their lives, and besides they were faced with forced labor and various forms of harassment, which were sometimes even followed by violence<sup>(4)</sup>. Such experiences served as traumas for them, and when they came to realize the post-war political trend where the British Government pondered an early transfer of power to Aung San and other Burmese nationalists, many of them experienced fear and antipathy. However, those Anglo-Burmese who had withdrawn to India were faced with a lesser degree of danger than those who had remained behind in Burma, since physically at least they were in safe circumstances, and they were still able to convey their demands to the Government of Burma in Simla through their leaders.

From August 1942, the Government in Simla initiated a plan for the post-war rehabilitation of Burma, with the approval of the home government in London. The biggest issue they were faced with here concerned the type of status to be accorded to Burma after the war. Discussions between Simla and London continued for nearly two and a half years, until their conclusions were finally presented in the *White Paper on Burma* in May 1945. However, the process was by no means an easy one, especially since they were faced with hurdles regarding the question of the length, namely the amount of time they had to allot as preparation for the granting of a Dominion (self-government) status to Burma after the war. The British Government had already decided in November 1939 to grant a Dominion status to Burma, at an unspecified date in the future.<sup>(5)</sup> Yet the authorities realized that they had to slow down the pace of power transfer, since they were keenly concerned over the fact that it would take a long time for post-war Burma to restore its devastated infrastructure, which had experienced heavy damage owing to the Japanese occupation.

In this situation, Kirkham who had been serving as Councilor for the Anglo-Burman Union for twenty years in Burma, and who had now become the President-in Chief of the Anglo-Burman Community in India, started activities oriented towards negotiating a better status for his community in the future Burma, with the Government in Simla. The minds of the then Anglo-Burmese community members in India were filled with resentment against the Burmese nationalists, whose activities had resulted in the crisis of the Japanese invasion. They also harbored feelings of dissatisfaction regarding the way in which the British had dealt with their community.

Kirkham's memorandum was written in such a situation. His aim was to explain the situation of the Anglo-Burmese in detail to the Government of Burma in Simla. It was typewritten and consisted of 26 pages (with 65 lines a page on an average), and his main assertion was that the Anglo-Burmese community needed much stronger constitutional protection in post-war Burma. After presenting some basic information regarding his community, he presented the reasons why the community needed constitutional protection and how it should be strengthened.<sup>(6)</sup>

The community's distrust of the Burmese people (by which Kirkham meant the Burmans), was mentioned as the strongest reason. He writes, "A Burman is by nature friendly and hospitable and altogether a likable fellow. But he is of uncertain temper and

can hardly be considered civilized, so long as he continues to commit on an average of 3.5 murders a day. His country remains the most criminal part of the British Empire.” We have no way of knowing from which document Kirkham obtained the information concerned in this accusation. Yet his statement cannot be judged as a total falsehood, since there are statistics indicating that 1514 cases of murder occurred in British Burma in the year of 1939-40, which works out to 4.15 cases a day.<sup>(7)</sup> Needless to say, however, we should bear in mind the fact that those murder cases could well have been committed not just by the Burmese (Burmans), but equally by Indians, Chinese, or any other groups of people who inhabited the nation of Burma in those days. Nevertheless, we have other statistics mentioning the fact that the murder ratio per 10,000 people in the Province of Burma in 1935 reached 0.689, which constituted the highest figure among all the provinces of India.<sup>(8)</sup> Moreover, the increasing rate of murders during the period spanning 1910 and 1935 in Burma hit the second highest point within the Indian Empire (the figure being 1.87, in contrast to 1.88, which was the point reached in the Province of Punjab and which turned out to be the highest).<sup>(9)</sup> Hence, if we limit our comparison to the areas encompassed solely by India, the fact is that Kirkham’s description emphasizing Burma as “the most criminal part” appears not to be so very erroneous. However, his accusations and criticism of the Burmese people eventually escalated to an emotional level, as revealed by the following description.

“His (a Burman’s) equilibrium is easily disturbed as he is quick of temper. He may be upset as a result of depressed economic conditions, brought on mostly by his own self-indulgence. He will then use his *dah* (Burmese traditional sword) on the undefended non-Burmans around him, whom he considers to be interlopers and the cause of his economic misery. The Indo-Burmese and the Chino-Burmese riots of the years 1930-31 are instances of violence against the Indian and Chinese population, which had acquired affluence by industry, thrift and diligence. The Burman is also a race-proud individual and reacts violently to any incident, which he feels is an affront to him or to his national institutions. In this connection, the case of the Burmese-Muslim riots of the year 1938 (the original contained the incorrect figure of 1937) is worth recording. The chief victims of these riots were the Zerabadis, natives of Burma and of mixed Indian and Burmese descent, and followers of the Muslim faith. ----The Zerabadis were a trustful people or rather had leaders who were complacently trustful of the Burmese majority. ----They dressed as the Burmese did, lived in Burmese huts in the midst of Burmese neighbors, spoke Burmese as their mother tongue, intermarried freely with the Burmese people, ---and in every visible way lived and behaved as the native Burmese did. In one and only one respect was there a difference and this was in religious beliefs. When a pamphlet was published from a Muslim source in Rangoon, which the Burman Buddhists considered to be an affront to their religion, there were dreadful repercussions on the outnumbered Zerabadis scattered among the Burmese population. ---- (the official report of the Government) is there to convince any one of the almost inhuman nature of enraged Burmese mobs. The closest parallel in European history is the massacre of the Huguenots (St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre which occurred in August 1572). With a sensitive and unreliable temperament such as the Burmese possess and which can make them hideously unreasonable in their dealings with other races,

Anglo-Burmans can hardly expect fair treatment without constitutional safeguards.”<sup>(10)</sup>

Every riot that Kirkham indicates here did indeed occur in Burma. These were the anti-Indian riots of 1930, the anti-Chinese riots of 1931, and the anti-Muslim of 1938 (which as a matter of fact was actually anti-Indian, since many Hindus were victims too). It is historically accurate to state that a few thousand Burmese Buddhists attacked Indians and Chinese in a brutal manner, and stimulated counter attacks on their part. Nonetheless however, we may perhaps assert that Kirkham was being a little over-emotional and unfair on this issue, since it is too subjective to generalize regarding the nature of the Burmese people through merely emphasizing such negative incidents. Needless to say riots did occur, but the number of the rioters was limited, and the majority of the Burmese people were unrelated to those riots.

In addition to the demand for continued constitutional protection, Kirkham’s memorandum indicated 29 other requests with reference to Simla and London. The entire body of requests may be classified under three issues, namely language (9 items), education (7 items), and others (13 items). With regard to language, the main request was to lighten the burden of the Burmese language for the Anglo-Burmese in their public lives, and to grant greater precedence to English in matters relating to executive, legislature, judiciary and educational issues. He even described Burmese as “a cottage language” and not a world language gifted with a literature of its own except for its scriptural writings, and insisted that no attraction could be gauged for it with reference to either a world price or intrinsic value<sup>(11)</sup>. He requested that English become the national language in Burma, and that Burmese not be assigned as a subject for any civil-service examination. Among the requests related to education he strongly demanded that Anglo-Burmese students be provided with a much more enriched educational milieu than that allotted to Burmese students, and among his other requests he included a rather surprising demand, wherein he asked for the adoption of British civil law for the Anglo-Burmese community.<sup>(12)</sup>

On reading these demands of Kirkham, it becomes clear that the Anglo-Burmese harbored deep feelings of affection towards Britain, the English, and European culture, while simultaneously looking down upon the Burmese people and their culture (chiefly their language), under the impetus of prejudice. They believed moreover that the security granted them by Britain was insufficient, and that the community deserved more.

The Government of Burma in Simla, which had already initiated work planned towards post-war reconstruction, adopted an indifferent attitude towards Kirkham’s memorandum. A minute penned by an official in Simla with reference to his memorandum (dated 19<sup>th</sup> February 1943) states, “The problem is an amazingly difficult one. The situation with many of these people is that they attempt to be Europeans on a lower level rather than being content to be Burmans on a high level. I am not one of those who would deny the Anglo-Burman community the right to retain the ideals of civilization and life inherited from their fathers, but I do feel that it is going to be an almost impossible task to assist them to retain that style of civilization and life in the changed conditions in Burma----.”<sup>(13)</sup>

In this description we perceive a degree of ridicule adopted by the government officials, with regard to the Anglo-Burmese nature of harboring strong feelings of affection for the British and European way of life. They rejected Kirkham’s demands as a matter of

course, viewing them as issues impossible to realize when Burma attained a Dominion status in the not too distant future. Both Simla and London did not believe that Burma would be maintained forever as a pre-war style colony under the British Empire, after the war had ended.

There was another Anglo-Burmese leader, namely C. H. Campagnac, who had served as a member of the Senate in Burma and who became a representative among the evacuees in Bangalore (India). He too wrote a memorial that was submitted to Simla, where he described his dissatisfaction over the treatment afforded to his community by the British. Campagnac was discontented over the fact that a lesser number of decorations were granted to the Anglo-Burmese when compared to the British, even though they had served the British with devotion during the hard days of the evacuation. The reaction of government officials towards this memorial too was halfhearted, and an official minute attached to his memorial described Campagnac's dissatisfaction as reflecting the inferiority complex of their community.<sup>(14)</sup>

### ***3.2. The Anglo-Burman Conference in Simla<sup>(15)</sup>***

Both Kirkham and Campagnac continued conveying their community's demands to the government officials in Simla, but they finally realized that it was impossible to change the basic attitude of London, which was to grant a Dominion status to Burma in the future. After undergoing agonies they finally changed their stance and decided to hold an official conference in Simla by inviting leading members of their community, and their aim here was to discuss the matter of the Anglo-Burmese attitude after their return to Burma, along the lines of Simla and London. The conference was accordingly undertaken at the instance of the Reconstruction Department of Simla, and it was held under the auspices of the Governor of Burma (R. Dorman-Smith) from 27<sup>th</sup> January to 4<sup>th</sup> February 1944, the official name being the Anglo-Burman Conference.

Twelve Anglo-Burmese were invited as the key participants to the conference. These included three officials of the Indian Civil Service, a member each of the Senate and Lower House, a former lecturer of the Government Technical Institute, a former Deputy Registrar of the High Court, and others. The conference itself was divided into two meetings: an unofficial closed session where the participants comprised the above-mentioned twelve participants, and an official meeting consisting of 150 participants including ordinary Anglo-Burmese evacuees. At the official meeting, three guests who were not Anglo-Burmese were also invited. These were U Tin Tut, a Burmese ICS who served as Reconstruction advisor under the Governor, U Htoon Aung Gyaw, a Burmese member of the Lower House who had served as the Minister of Finance in pre-war Burma, and F. B. Arnold, a British ICS official. Although U Tin Tut and U Htoon Aung Gyaw were Burmese, both enjoyed the unstinted confidence of Governor Dorman-Smith. This reveals the strong support the Government of Burma offered this conference.

At the unofficial session held on 27<sup>th</sup> January, the future political stance the Anglo-Burmese community needed to adopt was discussed. Three choices were presented as possible counterparts, namely people with whom they needed to cooperate with closely in post-war Burma, and these were: (a) The European community (b) The Burmese community

(c) The British Government. Their choice (c) meant the continuation of the pre-war style of being protected by the constitution. As far as Kirkham's memorandum was concerned, it must have been natural for them to choose either (a) or (c). However, they concluded in an about-face that they would regard themselves as a people of Burma, and that they wished to continue as such. This meant they clearly chose the Burmese community as their counterparts in post-war Burma, and it goes without saying that this was contradictory to Kirkham's memorandum.

Prior to looking into the reasons why they reached such a conclusion, it would be instructive to probe first the atmosphere that pervaded the official meeting that followed the day after the unofficial session. At the start of the meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> January, the Governor delivered his welcome address, and later U Tin Tut, a Burmese ICS, made the following speech.

“If the decision of the Anglo-Burman community should be in the direction of desiring no special privileges and safe-guards, of reliance on their ability to hold their own with others and of putting their trust in the good sense of the Burmese people, the decision is one which Burmans will welcome and to which, I am sure, they will respond in a like spirit of generosity and trust. We are all confident that the might of the United Nations will soon release our dear country from the enemy and it cannot be long before Burma achieves her due position as an equal partner in the British Commonwealth of Nations. ---- Let us pull together as a united nation and not as a collection of communities. ---- Our separation is unthinkable because we are too deeply inter-winded by the ties of blood and of common interests. Join us as equals and as brothers. Share our common heritage, enrich us with what you have inherited from both Europe and Asia and take your places in the very front line of a new and combined Burmese Nation.”

We may view this simply as a welcome speech by a Burmese high official to the community of Anglo-Burmese, but at the same time, however, we may view it as a speech implicitly urging the Anglo-Burmese to come over to Burmese side and cooperate with them, since the road map to grant a Dominion status to Burma had already been drawn by the British government, and there was no possibility that Burma would return to a pre-war style colony. Hence, he indicated that it would be wise on their part to cooperate with the Burmese. Since a Burmese high official who had been deeply trusted by the Governor had delivered the speech, its contents must have reflected the government's policy. It was impossible for Simla and London to make an exception in dealing with the Anglo-Burmese community in the face of the firm principle of granting a Dominion status to Burma in the future, and so they were eager to see the community members withdraw their demands for constitutional protection. Reflecting on this context, Campagnac gave the following response to U Tin Tut's speech:

“Burma is our motherland. Many of us have Burmese blood in our veins and nearly all of us have Burmese relatives. We are as much attached to Burma as any Burman is and we are all equally looking forward to the day when we shall return to our native country.”

Campagnac emphasized the importance of their Burmese blood and displayed his understanding of Burma as the motherland of the Anglo-Burmese, and this pro-Burmese response must have sounded like a desirable reaction to U Tin Tut and the Government of

Burma. Since he and other leading Anglo-Burmese participants had already declared that they would regard themselves as people of Burma, his speech was delivered as a prearranged statement. Consequently, the following two points were declared in the official meeting, and were dealt with as conclusions of the conference.

- (a) The community members consider themselves people of Burma.
- (b) The community abandons all claims to special privileges and regards as its best security the confidence and friendship of the Burmese people.

This clearly meant the Anglo-Burman Conference in Simla decided to abandon all claims to special privileges related to the constitutional protection of their community, and officially adopted the attitude of deepening their trust in the Burmese and promoting friendship with them. Furthermore, they viewed themselves as being a part of the Burmese nation.

### ***3.3. The reason why they changed their anti-Burmese attitude<sup>(16)</sup>***

More than 150 Anglo-Burmese in India attended the Simla conference, but those numbers were just a few compared to the ten thousand residing in India. Inevitably, various criticisms and questions concerning the decision of the conference were delivered to Kirkham and Campagnac. Here, in order to understand the reasons why they drastically changed their strong anti-Burmese stance and allowed the Anglo-Burman conference to declare a pro-Burmese spirit, the core of the answers whereby Kirkham responded to those complaints and queries will be examined.

On 27<sup>th</sup> June 1944, Kirkham wrote a letter to each representative of five Anglo-Burmese refugee bodies that existed in India, in order to explain his response concerning the many criticisms and questions that had reached him. The main portion of his response consisted of the following words.

“Burma is our home and I have yet to meet a member of the Community who does not desire to return to Burma. --- Now we cannot say that prior to 1942 our relationship with the Burmese people was on a satisfactory basis. I, personally, was not satisfied with the outlook and attitude of my Burmese neighbors 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. We did not stop to reflect whether the Burmese people had cause or reason for their own feelings and conduct towards us. At the same time I could see no escape from the unfortunate situation that the Community had found itself in, except by forcible intervention in its favor by the Parliament. I knew at the same time that the beneficial effects of such intervention even if it could have been invoked, could only be fleeting. It would be distasteful to the Burmese and it could not mend, still less be a permanent cure of the relationship between the communities. Moreover, it would only breed a deeper resentment between the two groups.--- A broader and a statesmanlike approach was called for. It seemed necessary to be Burmese not only in definition but in spirit.--- I know, and we all know, that constitutional safeguards given to minority interests act as an irritant on the majority and are ineffective in practice.--- Why not then contribute towards a new relationship by taking the initiative in showing a new spirit, - by foregoing special privileges? --- U Tin Tut assures us that our decision to give up special privileges would be,

“one which Burmans will welcome and ---I am sure, they will respond in a like spirit of generosity and trust.” I do not think that these are idle words spoken in a moment of irresponsible exuberance. --- Anglo-Burmese wish to serve Burma, “unselfishly and well” in the same way as an Englishman would desire to serve England. --- Let us remove from our Community all the things we dislike in other communities. By doing so, we are thinking not so much of what we deserve but of what our contribution can be. I am aware that many of us still harbor doubts, and fears, and anxieties for the future. --- I confess that I also am sometimes subject to them. But members of the Conference were told, “you know too, that behind you are the inexhaustible resources of a Father who never fails his children.” For an entirely Christian Community these words should inspire and strengthen and calm our fears.---”

This explanation of Kirkham involves two contradictory understandings. One is based on his realistic comprehension that it was unavoidable for the community to not just cooperate with the Burmese but to become Burmese, not just in definition but in spirit as well. He therefore accepted the fact that every request for special privileges in postwar Burma should be given up. Another was his honest feeling that he still could not rid the minds of his people of doubts and fears regarding the Burmese (or Burmans in his own words), which he had already described in his 1942 memorandum. However, he tried to overcome these contradictory feelings through making himself think in terms of modeling the Anglo-Burmese on the Englishmen who served England “unselfishly and well,” assuming that his own community too could serve Burma in a similar manner. Moreover, in order to persuade his community members, he even made reference to Christianity, which was their own religion, and emphasized the fact that God would “never fail his children”.

Kirkham’s response indicates that the Simla declaration did not reveal an alteration in his community’s genuine feelings from anti-Burmese to pro-Burmese, but it did reflect their realistic thinking that they had to react in accordance with the change in the mainstream political situation. The Simla declaration itself, however, was accepted as an official political decision on the part of the Anglo-Burmese community by both Simla and London, and it developed a life of its own beyond the community’s real feeling.

## IV. Uneasiness in the days before and after independence

### 4.1. *Beyond expectation*

The Japanese occupation of Burma had weakened since their defeat in the Imphal Campaign in July 1944. In March 1945, Mandalay was recaptured by the British Forces, and at the end of the month the Burma National Army led by Aung San took up arms against Japan after their secret preparation since August 1944. In May 1945, Rangoon was retaken by the British, which followed Japan’s surrender in August. The Government of Burma returned from Simla in October and took the place of British military administration that had been led by Lord Mountbatten for five months. The Anglo-Burmese in India soon returned to Burma. The returnees were reunited with their relatives and friends who had remained behind during the period of Japanese occupation, and learned of their harsh

experiences during the war. This evoked strong feelings of uneasiness in their minds concerning the fact that although Japan had been defeated, the British government had started negotiations over Burma's independence with Burmese nationalists such as Aung San, who had cooperated with Japan.

The British government made public in May 1945 their post-war policy on Burma through the *White Paper on Burma*, which declared the Governor's three-year direct rule and rehabilitation of the social and economic infrastructure as having the top priority. The pre-war 1935 constitution (the Government of Burma Act) was to be re-enforced after that, and later preparations for the nation's Dominion status were scheduled to start. Viewed from the Burmese nationalist perspective, however, this appeared to be a backward-looking policy, which was intended to slow down the pace towards granting full independence. Moreover, they were dissatisfied with Dominion status itself as the goal of colonial Burma.

Inevitably, confrontation between the nationalists and government arose soon after the Governor's return. Aung San who led the biggest Burmese political party (the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League, AFPFL) assumed leadership and developed a non-violent wide public struggle against the Governor. The British Government after ten months hesitation finally changed their attitude as a sign of appeasement towards the AFPFL, since they perceived a rapid transformation in the international situation, such as the quick progress of the Cold War and intensification of the independence issue in India. They hence decided to speed up the road map that they had presented in the *White Paper on Burma*, and finally determined to withdraw it.

In January 1947, the Aung San-Attlee Agreement was concluded in London, which admitted the fact that Burma was to attain either complete independence or a Dominion status, whichever they choose. Since Aung San and his colleagues chose the former, the road map towards early independence was confirmed at this point. This was only a year and eight months after the *White Paper on Burma* was made public.

From the Anglo-Burmese point of view Aung San and the AFPFL were targets of distrust, since they viewed them as ringleaders who had driven the Anglo-Burmese away into a miserable situation during the war by cooperating with Japan. Simultaneously, however, an attitude of distrust towards the British Government also arose, owing to their rapid alteration of posture that admitted the transition of power to Aung San and his colleagues within two years. For the Anglo-Burmese, the granting of a Dominion status to Burma step by step was something they had accepted as an inevitable outcome, but the granting of independence all at once (without the experience of a Dominion status), and especially the transition of power to Aung San and his colleagues who had actively supported the Japanese invasion of Burma, was something they had least expected.

Strong feelings of uneasiness arose within their minds, and consequently the Anglo-Burmese community held their first public conference in Rangoon on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1946, in order to organize their political body. Campagnac served as leader of this conference, wherein 300 people gathered. Twelve members were elected to form a new political body that was designated the 'Anglo-Burmese Council' and it was expected to function as a single Anglo-Burmese party. The Council made public their three political aims, namely: (1) To ascertain the political feelings of the Anglo-Burmans throughout Burma. (2) To keep

in touch with the Burmese political opinion. (3) To advise Anglo-Burmans from time to time on the changing political situation in the country.<sup>(17)</sup> They also reconfirmed the fact that they would go along the lines of the Simla declaration, and claimed equal rights and opportunities as citizens of Burma. On 25<sup>th</sup> September, the Council resolved the statement which said, “In our march towards complete independence we pass through the stage of Dominion Status; this, in view of the present world situation and the economic rehabilitation, Burma is urgently in need of.”<sup>(18)</sup> They firmly believed that the experience of Dominion status was indispensable to Burma before the attainment of full independence, and they also emphasized the fact that they needed to co-operate with all parties and not affiliate with any political party. This meant, however, that they had decided to negotiate with Aung San and his party the AFPFL as well.

#### ***4.2. Mrs. Buchanan’s petition to Prime Minister Attlee***

However, intense opposition by certain of their community members greeted these moderate and compromising reactions of the Anglo-Burmese leaders, and the strongest opposition was brought forth by Mrs. Buchanan, a seventy years old widow who lived in Insein (a town in the north of Rangoon). She was an evacuee to India during the war, but since the Japanese burned her house, she had to live in poor circumstances after her return to Burma. She was disgusted with the appeasing attitude of the British towards Aung San and his colleagues. In a mood of strong resentment she sent directly a petition to the British Prime Minister Attlee on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1946, which included some harshly critical remarks about the Burmese people and the total rejection of independence. It was sent a month after Aung San and other AFPFL leaders had been designated as members of the Executive Council, which was an advisory body for the Governor (but it became a body equivalent to the Cabinet later in January 1947). The principal section of her letter comprised the following passage.

“How is it that the Japs are being tried and sentenced, while disloyal and treacherous and brutally cruel Burmese are being so protected by His Majesty’s Government that not a single instance of their atrocities has been printed? --- All of us want British Rule alone, only the arrogant Burmese politicians --- are shouting slogans for so-called Independence! --- The present Premier’s (Aung San’s) trained men – trained to hate and kill every non-Burmese and non-Buddhist. They cut down women and children, hacking all pregnant women in half across the body, leaving them with the unborn infants in halves, lying on the village streets. ---- the Burmese did nothing for the war and they have done nothing for the country at any time – it is all British, Indian and foreign money and efforts which built up Burma all round. If Britain really puts the Indians and Burmese in power over all, she will be betraying the sacred responsibility God has entrusted to her. ---- Neither India nor Burma will ever be able to administer a country.”<sup>(19)</sup>

This excessively pro-British letter, filled with false and discriminatory statements against the Burmese people, appears to be a case reflecting the genuine feelings that dominated the minds of the ordinary Anglo-Burmese people, who experienced a deep uneasiness over the manner in which their leaders were steering their community beyond the lines of the Simla declaration. Although Mrs. Buchanan did not criticize any of the

community leaders (such as Kirkham or Campagnac), it would be no exaggeration on our part to say that her petition clearly pinpointed the people's dislike of their leaders due to their compromising attitude towards British policy, which had been accelerating the transition of power to Aung San and their colleagues.

The Anglo-Burmese Council, however, disregarded Mrs. Buchanan's letter, since the Council leaders sought to seal all anti-Burmese voices within their community. They aimed at soft landing along the lines of the Simla declaration, which emphasized the Anglo-Burmese community's merger with the Burmese majority. Yet, at the same time, however, they demanded of the authorities that any Anglo-Burmese wishing to emigrate to Britain be granted the necessary benefits to do so by the British government, since many of their community members had suffered from the unexpected change in the political situation in post-war Burma.

On the other hand, however, the British government maintained its official stance that the Anglo-Burmese question had already been resolved by the 1944 Simla declaration. They considered the declaration an accomplished fact, with no exception. They also disregarded as a matter of course Mrs. Buchanan's petition and the demand of the Anglo-Burman Council for "Dominion status before independence," and offered merely a vague response to their added request for special consideration, for those who desired emigration to Britain.

Deeply resentful of this situation, Mrs. Buchanan, with a desire to fight to the finish, sent an open letter to the *Times*, a famous British conservative quality paper, the content of which was almost identical to her petition sent to Prime Minister Attlee, and this letter appeared in the paper on November 5<sup>th</sup> when the Burma Independence Bill had just reached its second reading at Parliament. At this point, some MPs from the Conservative Party (which then constituted the Opposition) who had already been contacted by Mrs. Buchanan, took advantage of this situation to attack the Labour cabinet and strengthen their objections against granting independence to Burma. However, Attlee was unaffected, and the Bill was passed in the House of Commons with 288 in favor and 114 against. In Burma too Governor H. Rance dealt with Mrs. Buchanan as a person "slightly unbalanced," and turned a blind eye to her petition.<sup>(20)</sup>

## V. The Burmese nationalists' view of the Anglo-Burmese

### 5.1. Aung San's speech to the Anglo-Burmese community

We shall now turn our eyes towards the Burmese nationalist view of the Anglo-Burmese community, for since they represented the indigenous majority in Burma, one needs to know how they viewed and comprehended the Anglo-Burmese people. A typical example of this may be observed in a speech by Aung San, an active leader of the pre-war Thakin Party (*Dobama Asiayoun*), which had developed into a radical anti-British movement outside the colonial House in the 1930s. After the war, as leader of the nationwide political body the AFPFL, Aung San stood at the forefront of negotiations with the British government for independence. His discourse on the Anglo-Burmese was deeply linked to that of the pre-war Thakin Party, which in 1930 presented its views on Eurasians

as follows. (This was found written on a political pamphlet of theirs entitled *Nainngan-pyu Sasu ahma' thi* or “Writings on State Reformation No.1”, and published at the very beginning of their activities. [Translation by the author].)

“You, who behave like non-Burmese people and neglect us Burmese like foreigners, ---you cannot call yourselves Burmese, since the Burmese have not gotten enough power yet in Burma. However, before long, time will come for you to call yourselves the fellows of Burmese with confidence.”<sup>(21)</sup>

Here, Eurasians or Anglo-Burmese are criticized because they refused to become Burmese people, and because they always turned their faces towards the British. The Thakin Party viewed them as a people between the border of the British and the Burmese, but yet at the same time they believed that they should stand with “us” (the Burmese) in the future, though they had been standing with “them” (the British) until the present. The Party’s attitude of demanding that they declare their Burmese-ness can be clearly seen in their phrase, “time will come for you to call yourselves the fellows of Burmese with confidence”. The Anglo-Burmese were expected by the Party to declare their Burmese-ness through an active declaration, and Aung San, too held the same understanding. When invited by the aforesaid Anglo-Burman Council to speak to the Anglo-Burmese community at the Rangoon City Hall on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1946, he spoke as follows:

“Let me be perfectly frank with you – your community in the past didn’t happen to identify yourself with national activities; on the other hand, you were even frequently on the other side. Now you have to prove that you want to live and to be with the people of this country not by words but by deeds. So far as I am concerned, I am perfectly prepared to embrace you as my own brothers and sisters.”<sup>(22)</sup>

Needless to say, this statement of Aung San shares the same context as the Thakin Party’s discourse in 1930. Aung San believed the time was now ripe for the Anglo-Burmese to declare themselves people of Burma. He emphasized the fact that the people “who behave(d) like non-Burmese people and neglect(ed) us Burmese like foreigners” should now rectify their past behavior, and they “have to prove” it “not by words but by deeds”. His words also remind us of U Tin Tut’s welcome speech at the Simla Conference in 1944. As already discussed in Chapter 3.2., U Tin Tut insisted that the Burmese people would welcome the Anglo-Burmese community’s choice in abandoning all special privileges, and making clear the fact that they were putting their trust in the good sense of the Burmese people. Both his and Aung San’s speech had the same context.

## ***5.2. Determination of Burmese nationality***

The AFPFL won a landslide victory in the elections for the constituent assembly in April 1947, and grappled with the establishment of a Constitution from June onwards. Although the tragic assassination of Aung San and his colleagues occurred on 19<sup>th</sup> July, deliberations concerning the Constitution were finalized, and the Constitution was approved on 25<sup>th</sup> September. Through this Constitution, four Anglo-Burmese members who were elected from the constituency allotted for their community attended the proceedings.

During the deliberation process, the British Government and the Government of Burma were both concerned as to how the determination of Burmese nationality would be defined

by the assembly. Governor Rance sent his official letters to the Burma Office in London explaining the deliberation process point by point, and at the same time he exchanged information with other officials within the Burma Office as to how British and European people in Burma would be treated after independence.<sup>(23)</sup> On the other hand, the Anglo-Burmese community was keenly interested in knowing whether they could maintain their British nationality after independence. Since Burma was a British colony, people born there were treated as the British subjects.<sup>(24)</sup> The ‘spirit’ of the Simla declaration in 1944 had nothing to do with them. They merely wished to know whether independent Burma would permit them to hold a dual nationality rather than how the new state would determine Burmese nationality, and many questions were sent to the Government officials concerning this topic. Under these circumstances the British Government decided to permit Anglo-Burmese to automatically receive British nationality, as long as their fathers or grandfathers were British subjects. Independent Burma too accepted their dual nationality, though they were obliged to choose one of their two nationalities after two years of independence.

The finalized determination of Burmese Nationality appeared in the Union Citizenship Act (1948), which was enacted along with Article 11 of the Constitution. The Act determined that any person whose parents or one of whose grandparents was an indigenous person of Burma, would automatically be granted Burmese nationality.<sup>(25)</sup> This meant that the newly independent state applied the principle of both *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli* accumulatively, as the criterion for determining Burmese nationality. Consequently indigenous ethnic groups such as the Burmese (Burmans), Shans, Karens, Arakans, Kachins, Chins, Mons and Karennees (Kayas) were granted Burmese nationality without any problem. They were viewed as Burmese natives who had lived in the country prior to the beginning of the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26). However, the Anglo-Burmese were placed in a questionable situation, since they were not accepted as a people who had been dwelling in Burma since then. Moreover, since the legal definition of Anglo-Burmese in pre-war days included persons of European descent who were born in India or Burma, and whose parents or grandparents had no indigenous Burmese blood, they would have been omitted from the list of Burmese nationals after independence. For such cases the Union Citizenship Act stipulated that any person born within Britain, the British Commonwealth, or British Colonies, and who had lived in Burma for more than eight years continuously since before January 4<sup>th</sup> 1948 (the day of independence), or in the period spanning January 1<sup>st</sup> 1932 and January 1<sup>st</sup> 1942 (the pre-Japanese invasion period), could obtain Burmese nationality through application.

According to this stipulation, most of the Anglo-Burmese who had evacuated to India during the Japanese occupation period could apply for Burmese nationality even if their parents or grandparents did not have any indigenous Burmese blood. However, they had to apply for Burmese nationality by themselves, and they were forced to give up their other nationalities. This meant they had to give up their British passports. In other words, this was an attempt by the newly independent state to make the Anglo-Burmese people manifest a clear intention to become people of Burma, “not by words but by deeds,” through the visible act of applying for Burmese nationality.

### 5.3. *Growing uneasiness*

On 4<sup>th</sup> January 1948, Burma attained independence from Britain and became a republic outside the British Commonwealth. All four seats allotted for the Anglo-Burmese community in the Lower House disappeared after the first general election (1951-52), and the name “Anglo-Burmese” itself was excluded from the government list of ethnic classifications. English was still used in the government as a second language, but Burmese was recognized as the national language and given top priority. On the surface, it appeared as though ‘Burmanization’ of the Anglo-Burmese was barely successful.

However, the reality differed. Even before independence some Anglo-Burmese sought to leave Burma for England, and many did so after 1948, since the new state suffered from domestic wars with the Burma Communist Party (BCP) and the Karen National Union (KNU). British passport holders among the Anglo-Burmese people who experienced some disquiet regarding their future left Burma, not just for England, but for Australia and New Zealand as well.<sup>(26)</sup> Although it is difficult to evaluate those numbers accurately, more than 5,000 Anglo-Burmese who had lived in Rangoon left Burma by the first half of 1949.<sup>(27)</sup> The number of passports the embassy issued rose to 2,400, according to a minute noted by a staff member of the British Embassy in Rangoon dated 29<sup>th</sup> March 1949.<sup>(28)</sup> The same trend was observed in the census taken in 1949 by the Anglo-Burmese Council in Rangoon. It indicated that only 3257 (53%) of a total of 6193 Anglo-Burmese people in Rangoon held Burmese nationality. On the other hand, of those who were yet to apply for Burmese nationality, only 12% were thinking of applying in the future, 42% had no intention to do so, and the remaining 46% were undecided.<sup>(29)</sup>

The exodus of Anglo-Burmese from Burma continued and did not see the end. For convenience sake we may classify it into four periods, namely, the confused days before and after independence as the first period (from 1947 to around 1955), the deteriorating days of parliamentary democracy as the second period (from the late 1950s to early 60s), the days of the ‘Burmese way to socialism’ where the Burmese military and a single party (the Burma Socialist Programme Party) ruled the state as the third period (from 1962 to 1988), and the days after the national uprising for democracy as the fourth period (from 1988 to 2011, which were days of direct military rule).

As stated earlier, in the first period more than 5,000 Anglo-Burmese left Burma, because of their feelings of anxiety concerning the future. In the second period many still left Burma, since the political and economic situations failed to attain stability and they were also dissatisfied with the pressure of Burmanization by the state that slowly though steadily continued. For example, the Anglo-Burmese who worked in government services and for the military, encountered pressure to change their names into Burmese. In the third period, when the state adopted a policy of seclusion, the exodus appeared in succession because of the declining economic situation throughout the period, and the fortifying of Burmanization policies that aimed to exclude “un-Burmanized” Anglo-Burmese from public offices and the military. In the fourth period, which was a period of direct military rule, the government’s lack of zeal for democracy produced a mood of dissatisfaction among the people. Yet at the same time it became easier to leave Burma, since the military government loosened their emigration policy. Hence many Anglo-Burmese who had

remained in Burma up to the 1990s started going abroad, drawn by relatives or family members who had earlier emigrated overseas.

The Anglo-Burmese who quit Burma emigrated mostly to England and Australia. In particular, Perth, the capital of Western Australia, was for them a popular new dwelling place. Perth was the nearest major English-speaking city from Burma, and it was a place where many Caucasians who had emigrated from Britain resided. Since the climate was mild and it was not too cold in winter, it appeared the best place for them to think of emigrating to. In reality, however, emigration to Perth essentially got into stride after 1962. Although the Anglo-Burmese were Caucasians of mixed blood, emigration to Australia was not easy, since the state had adopted a “White Australia” policy until the beginning of the 1970s. Viewed through the eyes of the Australian government the Anglo-Burmese were primarily “Asians” and hence only Perth, a city that incessantly suffered from a lack of laborers accepted them. The people of Perth had little reluctance in employing them as workers in factories and shops, since the Anglo-Burmese were in any case Christians and native speakers of English. Some Anglo-Burmese people with specific qualifications were also hired as engineers and accountants, and their community in Perth has steadily increased since the late 1960s. The activities of the Burma Friends Association of Western Australia enabled them to successfully forge strong relations between their community and the Australian government, and consequently it is estimated that the population of their community in Perth grew to well over 10,000 by the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century. This did not include second and third generations members who were born in the country.

## VI. How the Overseas Anglo-Burmese reminisce about their experiences of the 1940s

The first generation members of the overseas Anglo-Burmese community continue to sustain strong personal memories of WWII, and the exodus that followed the war. Here, in this last chapter, the question of their memories of the 1940s will be dealt with. The author conducted interviews with 24 Anglo-Burmese people (14 men and 10 women) between 2006 and 2008 in Australia (Perth), United Kingdom (London and Exeter), and New Zealand (Auckland), all first generation Anglo-Burmese immigrants to those countries.<sup>(30)</sup> Of those 24 individuals, two were above 20 years of age at the beginning of the Japanese occupation period (1942), three were between 15 and 19, ten were between 10 and 14, six were under 9, and the remaining three had not yet been born. The oldest was born in 1916 and the youngest in 1950. Owing to limitations of space, only the general features of their memories will be discussed here, while detailed personal discourses will be introduced on another occasion.

### *6.1. Occupations prior to leaving Burma*

Their occupations prior to leaving Burma are as presented below. They reflect the pre-war Anglo-Burmese vocational features that were already described in Chapter 2.3..

- Company employee

· Housewife	5
· Public servant (general position)	2
· Public servant (technical position)	2
· School teacher	1
· Academic researcher	1
· Army officer	1
· Student	3

### ***6.2. The Period of their emigration and their reasons for leaving Burma***

The period of their emigration from Burma and their reasons for doing so may be classified as follows.

#### **<Period of emigration from Burma>**

· From a year before independence to the end of U Nu's regime (1947-62)	12
· During the period of the 'Burmese way to socialism' (1962-88)	9
· After the military coup (1988- )	3

#### **<Reasons for leaving Burma> \*multiple responses**

· An aversion to living under the pressure of 'Burmanization'	11
· The instability of post-independence Burma	10
· Parents' decision	3
· Anxiety over their children's future	2
· An aversion to living under the military regime after 1988	2
· Persuasion by emigrant family members or relatives	3
· Marriage to a British man	1

### ***6.3. Memories of the Japanese occupation period***

Of the entire group of 24 persons, 21 had experience of the Japanese occupation, and while 8 of these had been evacuated to India, the remaining 13 had continued in Burma. The recollections of those who had remained behind in Burma were mostly painful. Various distressing incidents were mentioned during the interviews, while joyful episodes were limited (Please see below).

#### **<Basic recollections concerning the Japanese occupation period>**

· Painful	7
· Basically painful but also a few good memories	4
· No special recollections	2

#### **<Examples of painful experiences during the period> \*multiple responses**

· Torture inflicted on family members and/or friends by the Japanese military	6
· Lack of foods and clothing	5
· Experience of assaults by Japanese soldiers	4
· Witnessed or heard of rapes by the Japanese soldiers	3
· Detention by the Japanese military	3
· Deprived of food and property by the Japanese military	2
· Experience of forced labor by the Japanese military	1
· Forced to witness the execution of American POWs by the Japanese military	1

**<Instances of good experiences during the period> \*4 responses only**

- There was a Japanese civilian who treated my family with kindness 2
- There was a Japanese officer who rescued us from violent soldiers 1
- A few Japanese soldiers treated me (a child) with affection 1

**6.4. Estimation of Burmese nationalism**

Their estimation of Burmese nationalism is strongly colored by negative images, due to the harsh experiences they underwent during the Japanese occupation and later. The answers may be classified as follows.

- The independence of Burma was premature 6
- A dislike more for Burmese nationalists rather than the Japanese army, since they brought the Japanese army into Burma 2
- Tortures were inflicted by Burmese who had been hired by the Japanese military 2
- Burmese people were thinking of revenge against us during the Japanese occupation period 2
- Though the Japanese military police were cruel, Burmese who served as Japanese informants were much worse 1
- Though Aung San contributed to Burma's independence, his assassination cannot be assessed as a serious political loss to Burma 1

Although diverse negative views are revealed here, yet there were exceptions. One Anglo-Burmese woman did not mention any negative aspect of Burmese nationalism, and she responded to the author's interview by saying that she had never experienced prejudice in post-war Burmese society. Serving as a career official in the National Bank in Burma she was finally promoted to director, and she had little desire to emigrate from Burma until 1990. However, due to her daughter and son-in-law's strong insistence, she finally decided to leave Rangoon (Yangon) for Perth along with them. If they had not been approached her she would probably have continued in Burma.

**6.5. Impressions of Mrs. Buchanan's petition**

In the context of their many negative views of Burmese nationalism, the author enquired about their impressions (comments) concerning Mrs. Buchanan's petition to Prime Minister Attlee, which reflected a strong anti-Burmese tenor (Please see Chapter 4.2.), and since none of them knew about her or her petition, the author read out to them the main portion of the petition and enquired once more about their impressions. All told 12 persons replied with the following answers.

- Have no idea 5
- The contents reflect general feelings of the Anglo-Burmese community of those days 3
- The contents reflect feelings of the senior Anglo-Burmese of those days 2
- The contents are too extreme and emotional (I cannot agree with them) 2

Less than half of them viewed the petition positively, while others had no idea or disagreed with its contents. This suggests the likelihood that as over 60 years had elapsed after independence, strong anti-Burmese feelings such as those described in Mrs. Buchanan's petition have declined among the community.

## 6.6. Recognition of their homeland

The author's final question at each interview was, "Which country do you think is your homeland?" To this all the 24 individuals responded as classified below.

- I consider Burma as my homeland 11
- I consider Britain as my homeland 3
- I consider my present country of residence (Australia or New Zealand) as my homeland 5
- I consider no country as my homeland 5

As stated earlier, negative views concerning Burmese nationalism are strong among the interviewees, but 46% of them (11 out of 24) answered that they regard Burma as their homeland. Only 13% (3 out of 24) replied that they preferred Britain as a homeland. Those who considered Britain as their homeland had left Burma during the nation's most unstable period, both before and after independence (1947-50). It appears as though the earlier they emigrated the stronger was their feeling of intimacy towards Britain. However, even those who chose Burma as their homeland had no desire to return permanently to the country. At the most they dreamt of making a trip to Burma in the future (which became quite easy after March 2011, when the military regime in Burma ended).

We also need to ponder over the fact that 21% of them (that is, 5 out of 24 persons) considered their current nation of residence (that is, Australia or New Zealand) as their homeland. It is a phenomenon generally noticed that the later generation of immigrants tend to identify themselves with the nations of their residence, but the individuals the author interviewed all belonged to the first generation of overseas Anglo-Burmese communities. One may accordingly state that even in the first generation there may be people who to an extent have altered their national identity, in order to relate to the nations of their current residence. On the other hand, however, 21% of the interviewees (namely, 5 out of 24 persons) answered that they recognized no country as their homeland. Such individuals do not possess any familiar links to any nation. Their chief value lay in being radically Anglo-Burmese, irrespective of the part of the world in which they lived. Taking this into consideration, one may perhaps declare that among the overseas first generation Anglo-Burmese, the urge to sustain their identity (or the Anglo-Burmese-ness), is still strong.

Thus we see that the interviewees had a diversity of views as to which nation they considered their homeland. This can be viewed as a reflection of their historical experience since the 1940s, when they were forced to live 'between' a suzerain state (namely Britain) and a colony (namely Burma) during their most difficult days in Burma, and were buffeted by the turbulent seas of the time. They are people who had to wrestle with the choice as to whether to become Burmese or not, and hence it perhaps would not be incorrect to say that this experience gave rise to such a variety in their recognition of their homeland, as they possess at present.

Since research within Burma has not yet been conducted, the situation of the Anglo-Burmese community currently in Burma is unknown. However, it is evident that their overseas communities may disappear (or at least experience a weakening of their union) in the future, owing to the rapid fading away of the first generation of each community. For example, the Australian Anglo-Burmese Society in Perth was dissolved by 2014, due to the

ageing of its members. This means they did not succeed in getting a new generation to take over. The second and later generations, however, tend to identify primarily with the nation of their dwelling rather than with the Anglo-Burmese. Sustaining and prolonging the Anglo-Burmese character and temperament (or at least the memories) that their parents and grandparents held on to throughout their lives is difficult, and precisely for this reason, the history, experience, and reminiscences of the first generation of overseas Anglo-Burmese, need to be researched and recorded more.

## Notes

- (1) Ganga Sing (compiled), *Burma Parliamentary Companion*, British Burma Press, 1940, p.134.
- (2) *Census of India, 1931*, Volume XI: Burma, Part II, Imperial Table, Part B, see also M/4/1410 “Position of Anglo-Burmans in Burma”, 1942-47, British Library Oriental and India Office Collection (OIOC), London.
- (3) M/4/1410 “Position of Anglo-Burmans in Burma”, 1942-47, OIOC.
- (4) R/8/40 “Censorship submissions on intercepted mail and miscellaneous intelligence reports concerning Burma”, 21 November 1941-28/August 1945, OIOC.
- (5) M/3/370 “Constitutional Reforms in Burma: Attitudes of Burma to War Effort”, 1940, OIOC.
- (6) M/4/1410 “Position of Anglo-Burmans in Burma”, 1942-47, OIOC.
- (7) M/3/419 “Burma Crime Statistics”, 1898-1938, OIOC.
- (8) *ibid.* Calculation by the author.
- (9) *ibid.* Calculation by the author.
- (10) M/4/1410 “Position of Anglo-Burmans in Burma”, 1942-47, OIOC. Bracketed parts are added by the author.
- (11) *ibid.*
- (12) *ibid.*
- (13) *ibid.*
- (14) *ibid.*
- (15) The all information of Chapter 3. 2. is based on M/4/1410 “Position of Anglo-Burmans in Burma”, 1942-47, OIOC.
- (16) The all information of Chapter 3. 3. is based on M/4/1410 “Position of Anglo-Burmans in Burma”, 1942-47, OIOC.
- (17) *New Times of Burma*, dated 6<sup>th</sup> October, 1946, included in M/4/1410 “Position of Anglo-Burmans in Burma”, 1942-47, OIOC.
- (18) *ibid.*
- (19) M/4/1410 “Position of Anglo-Burmans in Burma”, 1942-47, OIOC. Bracketed parts are added by the author.
- (20) *ibid.*

- (21) Dobama Asiayoun, *Nain-ngan-pyu Sasu ahma' thi'*, Yangon, 1930.
- (22) M/4/1410 "Position of Anglo-Burmans in Burma", 1942-47, OIOC.
- (23) M/4/2693 "Government of Burma: Constituent Assembly, Reports of Proceedings", 1947, OIOC. and M/4/2694 "Nationality: Determination of Burmese Nationality after achievement of Self-Government", 1947, OIOC.
- (24) *ibid.*
- (25) Office of Constitutional Assembly, Burma, 1947, *Constitution of the Union of Burma*, Government Printing and Stationery, Rangoon, and M/4/2694, 1947, OIOC.
- (26) Koop, John C., *The Eurasian Population in Burma*, Cultural Reports 6, Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1960, pp. 22-23.
- (27) *ibid.*, pp. 22-23.
- (28) FO643/140 "Future of Anglo-Burmans", The National Archives (TNA), London, 1947-49.
- (29) Koop, John C., *The Eurasian Population in Burma*, Cultural Reports 6, Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1960, p. 60.
- (30) Names of the 24 interviewees are as follows. Bracketed parts mention dates and places of the interviews.
- Jeremy Fowler (6<sup>th</sup> March, 2006, London, UK)
- Gloria Ballard (6<sup>th</sup> March, 2006, and 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2008, London, UK)
- Constance V. Allmark (22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2006, Perth, Australia)
- Keith W. Allmark (22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2006, Perth, Australia)
- Marina J. Fontyne (22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2006, Perth, Australia)
- Terence Geiles (23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2006, Perth, Australia)
- Robert M. Peters (23<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> November, 2006, Perth, Australia)
- Colin C. Johnson (26<sup>th</sup> November, 2006, Perth, Australia)
- Patrick M. Bird (28<sup>th</sup> November, 2006, Perth, Australia)
- Peggy L. Bird (28<sup>th</sup> November, 2006, and 21st August, 2007, Perth, Australia)
- Allan C. Long (20<sup>th</sup> August, 2007, Perth, Australia)
- Allan Aukim (20<sup>th</sup> August, 2007, Perth, Australia)
- George N. King (22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2007, Perth, Australia)
- George A. Jacob (22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2007, Perth, Australia)
- Constance P. Linton (23<sup>rd</sup> August 2007, Perth, Australia)
- Barbara Pal (Khin Kyi Kyi) (24<sup>th</sup> August, 2007, Perth, Australia)
- Denzil Fowler (27<sup>th</sup> February, 2008, London, UK)
- Neville R. Windsor (28<sup>th</sup> February, 2008, London, UK)
- Noreen P. Clark (3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2008, Exeter, UK)
- Colleen Waugh (23<sup>rd</sup> September, 2008, Auckland, New Zealand)
- Terence L'Estrange (26<sup>th</sup> September, 2008, Auckland, New Zealand)
- Priscilla Dawson (Khin Than Hla) (26<sup>th</sup> September, 2008, Auckland, New Zealand)
- Molly A. Willett (28<sup>th</sup> September, 2008, Auckland, New Zealand)
- Michael C. Kirkham (28<sup>th</sup> September, 2008, Auckland, New Zealand)