



A HISTORY OF THE ANGLO-BURMESE COMMUNITY

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Throughout the former colonial world, in many instances what are referred to as 'hybrid communities' have evolved. In Africa, Oceania, Asia and the Americas, different groups were born of mixed relations between the colonists and indigenous peoples. In Asia, such groups, commonly known as Eurasians, developed in differing ways. These peoples were regarded varyingly from society to society. Often seen as a privileged class in comparison with the other native peoples, with the current trend in ethnic and postcolonial studies, ethnographers, historiographers and sociologists frequently class Eurasians as living in some kind of 'hiatus' with allegiances to no one and to nowhere. However, it can be said that these peoples were more loyal to their countries of birth and origin than has been believed. In Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia (the former French Indochina), Eurasians evolved from mixed relations between the natives and French rulers. In the Philippines, Mestizos and Amerasians were born of Spanish and Filipino, and American and Filipino miscegenation. Throughout the Indian Subcontinent, Anglo-Indians emerged from mixed relations between the British and other Europeans with Indians, whilst in Sri-Lanka, Eurasians and Burghers emerged as the descendants of Singhalese and Portuguese, Dutch and British unions. In Indonesia, Dutch-Indonesians emerged, descended from colonial Dutch and Javanese miscegenation. In Burma, the Eurasian community evolved through mixed relations between the British and other settlers of European origin with the local Burmese populace, and this community came to be known in two ways: as either the Anglo-Burmans or the Anglo-Burmese.

Today's Burma, the Union of Myanmar, is a nation situated in Southeast Asia between India and Bangladesh on the west, and Thailand, China and Laos to the north and east. Myanmar stretches more than 2,050 kilometers from north to south, and some 935 kilometers from east to west. With a population estimated at approaching some 58 million and an area of 676,577 square kilometers¹, Myanmar

is the largest nation of mainland Southeast Asia and joined the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1997 amidst worldwide condemnation of its military dictatorship, human rights violations and governmental policies. Formerly known as the Union of Burma, the country was renamed in 1989 shortly after the military, known as the 'Tatmadaw', took over control of the country. The said intention for the name change was that the term 'Myanmar' better reflected the indigenous name for the country, dubbing 'Burma' as the colonial name for the nation. Notwithstanding, it is agreed that both terms are indeed correct appellations for the country, 'Burma' being the informal, spoken term, and 'Myanmar' equating to the literary form of the name for the country. However, minority groups such as the National League for Democracy (NLD) and the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB)² all oppose the name change as an indirect and subtle means of domination by the largely Burman-controlled military government. The country is officially divided into fourteen administrative units, seven States (Pyeneh) and seven Divisions (Taieen). The States are named for the dominant racial group inhabiting each territory, thus being Shan, Karen-Kawthulé, Kayah, Chin, Mon, Arakan (Rakhine) and Kachin. The Divisions are primarily located within central Burma and populated by the Burman majority and are Rangoon (Yangon), Mandalay, Tenasserim (Tanintharyi), Magwe (Magway), Sagaing, Pegu (Bago) and Irrawaddy (Ayeyarwady). In practice, the States were traditionally autonomous, whilst the Divisions were governed centrally. The current Divisions and States more or less correspond to the British methods of governance of the country whilst they ruled, the Divisions making up what was once known as 'Ministerial Burma' and the States corresponding to the 'Frontier Areas'.

The current geographical entity that is Myanmar was settled millennia ago by several tribal groups moving down the Irrawaddy River Valley from Central Asia and the plains of Tibet. The country has been known by various names throughout the centuries, but chiefly as 'Suvarnabhumi' (Golden Land), 'Amarapura' (Land of Immortality), 'Yadanarbon' (Land of Gems), 'Bamar' or 'Mien/Mramma' (Land of the Gods and Strong/Fast respectively) and finally as the Kingdom of Ava³. The modern names for the country, both Burma and Myanmar, emerged from the name of the dominant tribal group who settled in the country. The Pyu, Anyathian, Thek, Mramma/Bamar, Kachin, Mon, Shan, Chin and Karen peoples all settled parts of the

country. However, the Mramma people, now commonly known as the Burmans or Bamar, mixed with the Anyathian, Thek and Pyu peoples and came to be the dominant group in the country. Founding a Kingdom at Pagan (Bagan) along the banks of the Irrawaddy River in 849 AD, they succeeded in uniting the country as we know it today for the first time during the 11th century. After adopting Theravada Buddhism and developing a written script adopted from the Mon people, the Burmans succeeded in subjugating all the peoples of the region, even ruling parts of modern-day India, Thailand and Laos for a time also. However, war and peace interchanged frequently, and control over the country passed between the various groups, primarily between the Burmans, Shan and Mon. During three successive wars, the country gradually fell into the hands of the British, who ruled Burma as a province of India from 1886 until Independence was finally won in 1948 after 62 years of British rule and influence over the whole country.

The Anglo-Burmese community can trace its roots back to the early colonial history of the country, and from initial contacts made between Europeans and the native Burmese peoples. European traders first arrived along the coasts of southern Burma on the Gulf of Martaban (Mottama) and the Bay of Bengal in the 1600's. During this period, miscegenation between Europeans and natives led to the initial birth of a small Eurasian community near to present day Rangoon (Yangon) in the town of Syriam (Thanlyin). These Portuguese merchants, traders and settlers, led by Felipe de Brito, mixed freely with native men and women and their unions spurred the birth of the first Eurasian community which would later become known as 'Bayingyi' by the Burmese populace. This settlement didn't last however. De Brito is said to have gone mad and declared himself king of Lower Burma, causing his European outpost to be destroyed by the Burmese King, leaving a small community of Eurasians and Europeans, most of whom were banished inland near to the town of Shwebo, also known as Moksobo⁴. After the fall of the Portuguese colonial outpost, various European powers vied for control of the Burmese Kingdom. Dutch, French, Italian, British and again, Portuguese merchants, traveled the coasts of Burma, establishing trade agreements with the Kingdom and began to settle in Burma and mix with the local populace. Along with these varied European traders came Armenian and Greek settlers, fleeing persecution in their own lands ruled under the Ottoman Empire. Within time, the Kingdom even had a minister of government specifically responsible

for European and Eurasian residents known as the 'Kalawun', 'Kala' being the derogatory Burmese word to describe all foreigners from the west including, more specifically, Indians. Additionally, even the Court favorite with the Burmese Queen would usually be a Eurasian girl⁵. Whilst in India it can be said that Anglo-Indians were primarily British, Portuguese or French on the European side, Anglo-Burmans represented a more diverse lineage. Apart from the native blood, representing primarily the Burman but also the Karen, Shan and Mon peoples, the European or 'white' element included, aside from the British, Armenian, North American, Australian, Greek, Dutch, Scandinavian, Irish, German, Austrian, French, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, Iraqi, Persian and Czech influence. Jewish settlers of both Ashkenazi and Sephardi origin also came to Burma as merchants and mixed with the local populace, spurring the birth of a small but influential native Jewish population⁶.

From 1826 onwards, the British and the Burmese clashed over border disputes between the Burmese Kingdom and British expansionism eastwards from their Empire in India. Gradually, Britain gained control of the country. Culminating in 1886, the Kingdom of Ava under the rule of King Thibaw and the House of Alompra fell and Burma came under British control, annexed and to be ruled as a province of Imperial India. King Thibaw, Queen Supayalat and their immediate relatives within the Royal Family and the Konbaung Dynasty were banished to exile in Ratnagiri, India⁷. With the monarchy at Mandalay gone and free enterprise established under British control, immigrant groups moved into the country. Indians, Nepalese and Chinese settlers came into the country with the British and established themselves in the various towns and cities. At this time, British soldiers, settlers and colonial administrators also began to arrive alongside other Europeans and 'white' settlers. Mining, agriculture and mineral exploitation were all developed under British rule. The vast Irrawaddy River Delta was cleared, and the most fertile rice growing land in the world was developed. The oil fields of central Burma were developed and the mines of the north were exploited for their rubies, alexandrite, sapphires and jade. In the highlands, Burma's vast teak forests also began to be developed. A huge British conglomerate - Steel Brothers⁸, was largely responsible for the management and development of these enterprises. Relations between the native peoples and the British and other Europeans now began. Initially, British soldiers mixed with Burmese

women and their offspring, who came to be known as Anglo-Burmans, were to form an important go-between for the two peoples. Soon, non-military personnel began to mix with the locals and this further added to the community. There were even instances where members of the former Royal Family married non-Burmans. One such union between a Konbaung Princess and an Australian soldier produced a very famous Anglo-Burman, June Rose Bellamy (also known as Yadana Nat Mai in Burmese), known simply as 'Princess Bellamy'. Even the first Burmese Premier under the British, Dr. Ba Maw, and the first Burmese Ambassador to the USA, James Barrington, were of Anglo-Burman origins. Often, European males came to Burma and mixed with the local women, resulting in the birth of children of mixed descent. However, when the time came for these Europeans to leave, they frequently left behind their Burmese 'wives' and their offspring were forgotten. These children were often placed into convent schools where their Burmese heritage was frequently undermined through an emphasis on European culture, society and religion⁹. However, despite British policy attempts to prevent intermarriage, especially between military personnel and the Burmese, many mixed relationships developed and lasted. Seen as an important community who could rally between the British and the Burmese, the Anglo-Burmans began to dominate in the administration where non-European personnel were needed.

Notwithstanding, they were never fully accepted by either the British or the Burmese, and increasingly came to be viewed with suspicion by the latter, who viewed them with contempt as being 'too pro-British'. It is important to note that although Burma was ruled as part of India, conditions and society in Burma were vastly different. Buddhism perpetuates Burmese society with its peaceful, egalitarian notions. Women were and are equal to men and the overt sexism and caste systems of India are non-existent in Burma. Additionally, as there had not yet developed such stigma against the natives in comparison with India, which had been ruled as a colonial entity for much longer, Anglo-Burmans were not viewed in the same way as Anglo-Indians were in India. In India, British residents frequently regarded Anglo-Indians as 'a particularly difficult class' whilst in Burma, Anglo-Burmans were held with considerable regard by the colonial administrators and non-Asian settlers¹⁰. Furthermore, Anglo-Burmans more often than not married only within their community. At times, Anglo-Burmans also married Burmese people, Anglo-Indians,

Indians, Chinese and other native races besides those of European origin. Their offspring however were almost always classed as Anglo-Burmans. Within time, Anglo-Burmans dominated the colonial government, the railways and port authorities, the education system, the colonial police force and native army units, and were indeed a highly influential voice in colonial society. Fast establishing an elite class, the British increasingly called on the Anglo-Burmans to aid them in the running of the country. Anglo-Burmans were also instrumental in assisting the British in 'keeping the Burman in his place' as rebellions were common due to the fact that the Burmese had never fully accepted British rule. It is true that during the colonial era, the British openly encouraged racial, religious and ethnic differences to assist them in their policy of 'divide and rule' throughout their vast Empire. In Burma, it was no different. The British favored the Indian and Chinese immigrant groups they had brought to Burma with them. From the indigenous races, although the Burmans were by far the dominant group, the British favored the hill peoples. These peoples, the Karen, Kachin, Mon/Talaing, Shan, Chin and Arakanese, were ruled differently during the colonial era. Left more to their own devices under the Frontier Areas Council, the areas of central Burma, the Irrawaddy Delta and the Plains, known as 'Ministerial Burma' or 'Burma Proper' where the Burman dominated numerically, were ruled directly with a separate administration from that of the Frontier Areas. Furthermore, the British singled out the Karens and the Anglo-Burmese for the colonial armed forces and as relations were already historically strained between Burman and Karen, this further embittered the peoples of Burma from each other. The Karen also welcomed the British and embraced Christianity, further alienating them from the Burmans¹¹. Consequently, the Burmans now saw themselves ruled by the British, Anglo-Burmans, Indians, Chinese and minority groups in their own land. In the years to come, this bitter memory would strain relations between the Burmese central government and the different minority groups.

From the early 1920s, a new breed of Burmese Nationalist was born. Educated at Rangoon University, Calcutta University or even in Britain itself, these new, primarily middle-class, urban, Western-influenced youths were to exude a huge weight on the emerging colonial society. Imparting a Gandhian way of civil disobedience as well as provoking general strife and a disruption of daily life, this new movement began to emerge from the urban centers of Burma, chiefly from the city of Rangoon and its

environs. This movement came to be known as the 'Thakin' movement, 'Thakin' ironically meaning 'Master', the manner in which the Burmese people were expected to address the British. Furthermore, this movement also began to mobilize politically, becoming the 'Do-Bamar Asiayone' (We Burmans Association). In 1935 and again in 1937, riots took place throughout the country calling for Burma to be separated from India with its own government. Anti-Indian and anti-Muslim retaliation also took place after a massacre of Burmese nationalists¹² by the British and their Indian-Muslim troops. A national strike was called and the country was paralyzed. In response, a separate colonial administration was set up for Burma under the Dyarchy Reform and established through the 1935 Government of Burma act. Burma was now a separate Crown Colony and no longer had to answer to New Delhi. Anglo-Burmans were now officially recognized in the emerging Constitution. At this time, the population of Burma was estimated at around 17 million people, of which around one million were of Indian origin and 200,000 of Chinese origin with around 110,000 people counted as Eurasian¹³. This figure can be viewed with some discrepancy however as it would have counted Anglo-Indians resident in Burma amongst the figure. By that time, the Anglo-Burman and Anglo-Indian communities were viewed as one due to their cultural similarities and frequency of intermarriage¹⁴. Additionally, there were also marriages between Indians and Burmese, whose offspring were known as 'Zerbadi'. This community was probably also counted in with this figure. Notwithstanding, the Anglo-Burmans were by this time an important and distinct ethnic group in Burma. By now dominant in the political, educational and economic spheres of Burmese life, Anglo-Burmans developed an innate cultural affinity with all things European, more specifically, British. In dress, language, religion and social customs, some Anglo-Burmans modeled themselves on the British. Seen as traitors by the Burmese masses, this was to cause considerable unrest and problems after Independence. Called 'Kabyar' (half-caste) by the local populace, the Anglo-Burmans were now increasingly viewed with contempt. Seen as arrogant and 'too European' in their attitudes, the Anglo-Burmans were in a precarious state. What would they do if and when Burma became independent? Anglo-Burmese children born of unions between Europeans and Burmese were always educated along British lines and taught the British way so as to establish a native class swearing allegiance to Britain and to the Crown. Now, where would they go if and when British rule and influence in Burma came to a close? This was the question Anglo-Burmans

not only asked themselves, but was increasingly what the Burmans themselves began to ask.

At this time, as the Burmese clashed with the British to gain home-rule and Dominion status, the Japanese began to expand their might in Asia. It became clear the Japanese intended on invading Burma, rich in natural resources such as oil, rubber and minerals. The British made little effort to defend Burma and posts were quickly abandoned as European personnel and officials began to flee to India. Some factions among the Burmese were at this time open to welcoming the invading Japanese as liberators from British domination; many Anglo-Burmans now began making preparations to leave the country for safety in India. At this time, only those married to military personnel could secure passage to India by ship or by plane during the evacuation, so the vast majority of Anglo-Burmans made their way out of Burma by their own means. Many paid for flights and passage by rail and sea themselves; others were not so fortunate and trekked through the jungles to India. This exodus has become historically known as 'the Trek' and many Anglo-Burmans alongside Europeans, Indians and Chinese died en route¹⁵. Those who remained behind were to suffer horrendously. Those who could pass as Burmans did so; dressing in Burmese clothing, speaking Burmese and keeping a low profile; others were not so fortunate and were interred in prison camps by the Japanese, fearful of the Anglo-Burmans and their British/European allegiance. But frequently, the Japanese used the few Anglo-Burmans willing for their expertise in administration, their loyalty and their knowledge of the bureaucracy and day-to-day running of the country and its remaining infrastructure. The Burmans and other native races themselves indeed tried to help the remaining Anglo-Burmans who stayed behind or who could not get out, but many suffered and died under the Japanese occupation¹⁶. For those who survived, many questions were to surface as to where their allegiance would stand after the war had ended. With the Japanese occupation finally over and the British back from their hiatus in India where the pre-war government of Burma met in exile at Simla, colonial society was fast re-established. Anglo-Burmans began to come home and by late 1946, most had returned to Burma whilst some had remained in India or migrated to the UK. However, the fact that many Anglo-Burmans chose to leave during the war would provoke considerable suspicion and questions of loyalty among the Burmese in the years to follow.

Demonstrations and strikes again disrupted daily life and immediate cries for freedom and for a 'Burma for the Burmans' were now common occurrences. The British knew they would not be able to maintain control and the question had now arisen; Burma was heading for Independence, but what were the Anglo-Burmans to do? Organized in various community leagues, the Anglo-Burmese Association, the Anglo-Burman Union and the Anglo-Burman Council, Anglo-Burmans now had a voice to express their opinions to the British and to the Burmese as to where their allegiances lay. In late 1946, most Anglo-Burmans through the various Anglo-Burman groups expressed their desire to remain in Burma, and that 'indeed they considered themselves nationals of Burma'. However, for many Burmans this was not enough and many, including Aung San himself, called for the Anglo-Burmans 'to prove their allegiance by actions and not by words'¹⁷. Many were now torn now between their desire to please the Burmans and their desire to maintain their own identity and place in their homeland. Some steadfastly decided to become Burmese and abandoned their European dress, names and customs, taking to a more traditional Burmese way of life, but most swore they would remain as they were. As a protective measure, the departing British introduced legislation reserving seats specifically assigned for the Anglo-Burman community in the new parliament, and many senior government and military positions were reserved for them too. Control of the education system was also left largely in their hands as an English-speaking, educated class. Guarantees were made to protect their freedom of worship and culture, and the right to maintain English as their language as well as their schools¹⁸. However, as the British began to withdraw, many Anglo-Burmans began making preparations to leave with them for the United Kingdom, already fearful of what was to happen in an independent Burma, fast heading towards complete independence outside the British Commonwealth.

Prior to Independence, Aung San, leader of the Burma Independence Movement, and leader of the old 'Thakin' movement and the 'Do-Bamar Asiayone', vied for the trust and support of the different racial groups in Burma. He and his cabinet, organized as the Anti-Fascist Peoples' Freedom League (AFPFL), formed to fight against the former Japanese occupiers, openly met and discussed the future of Burma and the place each major ethnic group in the country would have in the new nation. The AFPFL soon became divided into two splinter groups, the AFPFL (Clean)

and the AFPFL (Stable) as rivalry between the groupings forming it grew more pronounced. After winning the support of the Anglo-Burmans, Shan, Kachin, Chin and a faction of the Karen people and tailoring a guarantee of rights for each ethnic group at Panglong in the Shan State, Aung San secured Independence from the British. However, before this could be achieved, he and his cabinet were assassinated. An arch political rival, U Saw, was implicated and executed for the crime. In the years to come, it would come to light that secret British factions, organized as 'The Friends of the Hill Peoples' masterminded the murder of Aung San and his cabinet. Their reasoning for this atrocity was said to be due to their anger at Burma's decision to leave the Commonwealth and the fact that Britain was leaving the minorities of Burma under the yolk of the Burmans. They also despised Aung San, who they regarded as a collaborator, and believed he would become a dictator in his own right should he be allowed¹⁹. Believing this would force Burma to remain under British rule, it only made the call for Independence even more pronounced. Clement Atlee, the then Prime Minister of Great Britain, is said to have panicked and immediately granted the Burmese their freedom, fearful of civil war in Burma and knowing an already bankrupt Britain did not possess the ability to face such an insurrection. The only surviving senior member of Aung San's cabinet, U Nu, was quickly chosen as leader and he reorganized the more moderate branch of the ruling AFPFL into a political party. Meanwhile, factional and splinter groups of the AFPFL, a group of Karen rebels, Muslim insurgents and the Communists retreated to the hills, breaking all ties with the government.

On January 4th 1948 at 4.20am, an auspicious hour chosen specifically by Burmese astrologers, the Union of Burma, the first British colony to sever all ties with Great Britain, came into being and immediately left the Commonwealth. Many Anglo-Burmans now began to pack up for the UK and Australia. The new State was organized along federal lines as a parliamentary democracy. The monarchy was disbanded and a republican society established with a President as the Head of State and a Prime Minister as actual leader. British models of government were adopted and free and fair elections were held. Parliament was organized with a bicameral legislature and a legal system based on that of the departing British. Freedom of speech and religion were guaranteed as well as political freedom and equality for all under the Burmese Constitution, drafted by Burmese Independence

leaders in conjunction with British constitutional and governmental advisors²⁰. It was agreed the President of the Union of Burma would generally represent one of the national minorities and should be a Buddhist, the first being Sao Thaiké, a Shan leader (Burmese-Sawbwa, Shan-Saophya) who was later executed after the military takeover in 1962. In the legislature, known as the 'Hluttaw'²¹, (Peoples' Council) seats were allocated among the minorities to guarantee them a political voice. The Lower House (The Chamber of Deputies) had equal and proportional representation for all Burma's peoples. However, in the Upper House (The Chamber of Nationalities), minority groups had a clear majority: this would subsequently provoke considerable unrest. There were initially four autonomous States: Shan, Kachin, Chin and Kayah along with Burma Proper, with the central government convening in Rangoon. Tensions among the Burmans and Karens in the Delta, and among other ethnic groups gradually led to the establishment of the Karen-Kawthulé, Arakan and Mon States and Burma Proper being divided into seven divisions. By the late 1950's, Burma was indeed a federation of fourteen units: the seven autonomous states with the seven divisions of Burma Proper. Sadly, this federal structure became weak and the government of Burma Proper, now known as 'Mother Burma' or 'Maha Bamar' (Greater Burma) gradually became the government of all Burma as power began to be centralized in Rangoon.

After the British left, almost immediate chaos erupted. The Karen minority and many other ethnic and political groups clambered either for Independence from the Union of Burma or to topple the new government completely. Rebellions by Communist insurgents throughout Burma arose as the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) went underground and was expelled from the AFPFL Coalition, and a separatist movement among Muslims in the northwestern region of Arakan surfaced at this time too. Additionally, the Mon people in the southeast of Burma voiced opposition to union with Burma and announced their intention to secede, fueled by Prime Minister U Nu's refusal to recognize that the Mon 'were anything but Burman'²². If anything, such ethnic chauvinism exuded by some prominent Burman leaders has done nothing but provoke and enforce the ethnic unrest and troubles in Burma. On May 5th 1948, the Karen, angered they were not fully involved in the Panglong discussions or granted the Independent State of Karenistan they said the departing British had promised them, declared their Independence from the Union of Burma.

The then federal government in Rangoon refused to recognize this and launched a counterattack. Civil war erupted, primarily from the rural areas of the country and by 1949, Karen rebel factions had captured much of Upper Burma, including Mandalay and even controlled suburban areas of Rangoon. The Communists now managed to gain control of large areas of the country and even held the strategically important towns of Pinyinana and Toungoo, as well as the rail lines between Mandalay and Rangoon. Chinese Kuomintang forces also spilled across the border into the Shan States, fleeing Communist China and the Maoist Revolution. Hoards of people fled from all over Burma to the relative stability and safety of Rangoon, the only area remaining completely under government control. It seemed at this time obvious the Karen were about to capture Rangoon and overthrow the government, causing the dissolution of the Union of Burma. But with the support of the military, order was re-achieved, and the rebels were pushed back. Due to all the insurgency and ethnic warring, the military began to be highly armed and given more and more powers. This would cause dissension among the ranks in the coming decade. Some Anglo-Burmans began to leave at this time, primarily for the UK. However, the Anglo-Burmans still continued to form an influential, bureaucratic elite and dominated the new government, ensuring English remained an official language in all areas of Burmese life. In the following years, the government gradually began to Burmanize the state. In 1958, Prime-Minister U Nu adopted Buddhism as the state religion, causing outrage among the Shan and other minorities. At this time, rebellions also erupted, primarily among the Muslim minority and the Christian hill peoples. In response, U Nu handed power over to a caretaker military government under General Ne Win. All Karen and some Anglo-Burman officers were disbanded from the Armed Forces and ultra-nationalistic Burman officers replaced them. Inflation was controlled and conditions were generally improved throughout the country. Order was efficiently restored and relative stability and a cleaning up of the bureaucracy were achieved. In 1960, free elections were held and U Nu and his 'Pyidaungsu' (Union) Party won a landslide victory, civilian rule subsequently being restored. This party was formed from the more moderate arm of the old AFPFL under U Nu. Within time, open discrimination against Anglo-Burmans began to surface as resentment grew. Fearing their possible domination by Anglo-Burmans, and suspicious of them as a legacy of British rule, many Burmans expressed their desire for the Anglo-Burmans to 'Burmanize or leave'. Many Anglo-Burmans equated

this suspicion with jealousy; remnants of the favoritism many believed the Anglo-Burmans received during British rule. Reserved seats in parliament were taken away from them and jobs previously allocated for them were removed. The government now also introduced legislation calling for Anglo-Burmans to make a formal declaration of citizenship; dual-nationality was no longer recognized by the government, and Anglo-Burmans had to fully renounce British Nationality and turn in their British Passports or lose their rights as Burmese Citizens and become subject to the rules and regulations applicable to resident aliens²³.

However, after internal divisions struck the ruling 'Pyidaungsu' Party, Communist insurgents rebelled against the government and paralyzed the country. The ruling party split into two warring factions. As a primarily westernized, educated, Christian and English-speaking elite, the Anglo-Burmans were now seen as a vestige and reminder of British days and regarded as nothing but British 'lackeys'. Furthermore, late in 1961, the Shan and Kayah peoples announced their intention to secede and declare Independence from the Union of Burma²⁴. As a result, meetings were set between the central, federal government and the various minorities. Shortly afterwards, after growing discontent among the armed forces, the military took over in a coup launched on March 2nd 1962 under Major-General Ne Win. Numerous politicians and delegates of the ethnic minorities, who at that time were present in Rangoon for a conference to find peaceful solutions to ethnic conflicts, were arrested and imprisoned; some were even executed or disappeared. All parliamentary institutions were dissolved and replaced by a Revolutionary Council consisting of 17 members²⁵. All members of parliament, judges, teachers, business leaders and other prominent Burmese were arrested. Ne Win's said intention was to prevent the disintegration of the Burmese Union. In reality, he closed Burma off from the outside world, and attempted to revert the country back to the times of the old Kings. Free enterprise was stopped, English was abolished as an official language and all foreign influence was to be removed. The Federal Constitution, independent judiciary, multi-party democracy and previous rights to autonomy were also abandoned. Universities were closed, and Burmese students overseas were called home. Burma was closed off to the world. All industry and foreign owned or controlled companies as well as land were nationalized, and foreigners were viewed with arch suspicion as a xenophobic, socialist state was born under Ne Win's misguided 'Burmese Way to

Socialism'.

At this point, most Indians, Anglo-Indians and Anglo-Burmans chose to leave, the majority going to the UK and Australia. Those who chose to remain had to abandon their former culture, traditions and way of life. The new Burma Citizenship Laws required all residents of Burma to carry state identification cards detailing their names and ethnic background, as well as their citizenship status. Introduced by the military regime after the official establishment of the socialist state in 1976 (The Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma), these laws denied full-citizenship to all those who could not prove both sides of their families were resident in Burma prior to 1826, or to those born of one Burmese and one foreign parent. Those who could not prove this, or who were of mixed descent were classed as 'associate nationals' or 'naturalized citizens' and were denied the economic and political power and rights afforded to full citizens. As a result, some Anglo-Burmans who had not made the declaration of citizenship subsequently lost their full citizenship rights²⁶. A further exodus of Anglo-Burmans now took place. This time most went to Australia, although many also chose the UK as their traditional destination, as well as Canada and the USA. Education was also reserved for full citizens, and associate nationals and naturalized citizens were barred from professions such as medicine, engineering, education, law and politics, areas in which they had previously dominated and excelled in. Since 1962, Myanmar has thus remained under constant military control in various forms, with the despotic Ne Win constantly on the sidelines.

In 1976, a one party socialist state was adopted in Burma, under the auspices of the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP), also commonly referred to as the 'Lanzin Party'. At this time, the country changed completely. The military were given huge powers and remained at the helm of the country. Former members of the Revolutionary Council, which took over in 1962, retired from the armed forces to become civilians in an attempt to prove to the world that military rule was over. However, military personnel have always remained on the sidelines of the government and it is agreed that from 1962 onwards, military rule has been the norm for the country under different guises. Political prisoners and dissidents either fled the country, were imprisoned or just simply disappeared. The former Prime-Minister, U Nu, fled to Thailand after the 1962 coup where he formed a Burmese government

in exile, raising a small army and traveling the world to educate and inform on the situation in Burma. However, in 1980, an amnesty was announced and many former dissidents and political opponents of the military regime returned home, including the ageing U Nu. The military adopted many tactics to tighten their grip on the country. The secret police and military intelligence service (M.I) were given enormous powers to search, arrest and detain as well as spy on the Burmese people and monitor suspected opposition to their rule. At its peak, the head of the military intelligence service was the daughter of Ne Win, Sandar Win. At one time, it was estimated that at least one in ten Burmese nationals were M.I. informers. In 1964 however, student unrest coupled with protests about economic problems caused demonstrations and dissent. As a result, there was a massive mobilization of the military, and the University of Rangoon Student Union, the birthplace of Burmese Nationalism, was blown up by the army. Foreign visitors were now limited to a maximum stay of seven days in the country, and former Burmese nationals residing overseas as well as their relatives were forbidden to return to the country. Burmese Consular offices overseas denied visitors visas to those who were of Burmese descent now resident overseas, even if they held the nationality of another country, and those who chose to remain outside of the country had their Burmese passports cancelled. In 1988, after even more severe economic problems, as well as the death of Daw Khin Kyi, the widow of Aung San, a massive uprising occurred. People took to the streets of Rangoon, Mandalay and every major city in the country, calling for reform and for an end to the one-party state. For days, it seemed the military were to stay on the sidelines. A civilian lawyer, Dr. Maung Maung, emerged to become leader of the country, and massive support was shown. But after a mere ten days of what people believed was a change in the country, the military launched a huge crackdown. Thousands of peaceful protestors in Rangoon, as well as monks, and doctors and nurses from Rangoon General Hospital were cut down by armed soldiers. The massacre was three times the size of that of Tiananmen Square in China of the same year, yet the Burmese troubles were hardly broadcast to the world. Even harsher military rule was now adopted, with curfews and strict censorship. Notwithstanding, the military announced they would hold free elections, and more than five hundred political parties came forward to be registered. The National League for Democracy (NLD), lead by Aung San Suu Kyi, emerged as the victor, but the Burmese Military refused to acknowledge this and remained in power. In 1989, the name of the country was

changed, and the former socialist system was abolished with the adoption of a free trade economy. Since then, investment has flooded into the country on a large scale, mainly from Singaporean, Thai, Malaysian and Chinese companies. However, many nations refuse to invest in Myanmar, believing it will perpetuate military rule, whereas other nations see investment as 'Constructive Engagement', forcing the country to open-up to the outside world and hopefully improving living conditions as a whole throughout the country and for its citizens.

It cannot be denied that during British rule, Anglo-Burmans were inadvertently favored by the colonial administration. More often than not, the local people were completely excluded from government and society. British colonists even established a European club within the confines of the old Royal Palace in Mandalay, infuriating the local people, and Burmans and other native peoples were forbidden to join such clubs as the AIDEC (Anglo-Indian & Domiciled European Club, for Eurasians and resident or 'domiciled' Europeans only)²⁷ or the Anglo-Burman Social Club. However, Anglo-Burmans also came under suspicion by the British themselves, and not just by a large part of the Burmese populace. Some British colonists saw them as a loyal native class whilst others regarded them as 'infiltrators' in some manner, able to move between both the British and the Burmese, never knowing fully where their real loyalties lay. But it cannot be ignored that Anglo-Burmans loved their country and that they did not encounter the same amount of stigma as did Anglo-Indians in India. It is true that some Anglo-Burmans displayed an open love for all things British, and that many Anglo-Burmans were not fully versed in the Burmese language, using English as their language 'of choice', dressing in European style clothing and eating British style meals. Indeed, some Anglo-Burmans did consider themselves 'better' than the local peoples and often viewed themselves as 'racially different'. However, this cannot be blamed on them as a group, as many were taught and molded this way, as the colonial education system used English as the medium of instruction and Burmese as a second language, and many had a living European parent or grandparent²⁸. Anglo-Burmans were able to enroll in British run schools, whereas most Burmese remained in monastery schools, where Burmese was used as the language of instruction. Additionally, where in India suitably ambiguous terms were used to classify Anglo-Indians, in Burma, before separation from India, Anglo-Burmans were classed as Anglo-Indians. After 1937 however, when Burma was

separated from India and received a degree of home rule, equally ambiguous terms were used to classify Anglo-Burmans²⁹. An important note is that some Anglo-Burmans married Burmese people and their children, whilst still being counted as Anglo-Burmans, were usually more openly exposed to their indigenous culture, and spoke and used the Burmese language more frequently than their counterparts.

Today, in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar ('Pyidaungsu Myanmar Naing-ngan'), there does remain a small Anglo-Burman community, primarily absorbed into the Christian minority. Most have adopted Burmese names and dress, and taken to more traditional Burmese customs. Most have relatives overseas, but are not willing or do not have the means to uproot and leave their homeland. However, many have remained Christian and advertently western and some suffer for this from hounding and harassment by the military government. Indeed, most Anglo-Burmans loved Burma as their own country. Those who left did so due to forced circumstances. Many were married to military personnel, workers attached to the large British companies and European civilians, and others left due to the military takeover and overt discrimination. Today's Anglo-Burmans still form a kind of indirect elite. Many have entered the bands of the armed forces to prove and demonstrate their love and solidarity for the country, many holding high-ranking positions in the army, navy and air-force. Anglo-Burmans are also to be found in all areas of business as well as the traditional areas and industries they were found in, such as the Myanmar Railways. In the educational field they still excel, many holding high positions in the Universities, Colleges and schools. Additionally, in areas where overseas dealings are involved, workers of Anglo-Burman extraction predominate, such as among the petroleum and gas companies, mining operations and port authorities. Most who remained behind have managed to Burmanize to an extent that they no longer suffer from the discriminatory practices in place under the military. Anglo-Burman cultural organizations are believed to no longer exist openly in Burma itself, but in the UK and Australia, there are still some organizations, such as the Anglo-Burman Church Organization, the Britain-Burma Society, and the Australian Anglo-Burmese Society. Most Anglo-Burmans today living outside of Burma are educated professionals. Many still excel in areas such as education and medicine. Few wish to return to the Burma of today, economically mismanaged over almost forty years of socialist rule, although some members of the community express a desire to return to the Burma

they knew under the British. It is hoped that when multi-party democracy is restored, many Burmese émigré groups will return. In the countries to which the Anglo-Burmans migrated, most indeed still identify themselves as Anglo-Burmese. Some Anglo-Burmans were keen to forget their Burmese roots but this wasn't as frequent as has been believed. In Burma, there did not exist such stigma against being of mixed descent as there did in India. In the UK in particular, there has been frequent intermarriage between Anglo-Burmans and Anglo-Indians, both communities sharing a common cultural heritage and history³⁰. However, the current regime in Rangoon (Yangon) under the 'Tatmadaw' (Burmese Armed Forces) and the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), recently renamed the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), are keen to eradicate all vestiges of the colonial past and existence of minority groups, carrying on from what was set in motion from 1962 onwards.

The ruthless Burmanization of the State continues today, with the renaming of the country in 1989 as Myanmar and the resettlement of various racial groups from their traditional home regions. Many places have also been renamed, such as Rangoon to Yangon and Prome to Pyay, and the destruction of the former colonial architecture and infrastructure, eradicating all influence other than that of the Burman language and culture. Today, the Union of Myanmar is a nation made up of several ethnic and racial groups. As the country was millennia ago when the first peoples began to move down the Irrawaddy River Valley, so it is today - a nation of warring tribes. The Union of Myanmar is made up of primarily the Burman people, now known as the 'Bamar' or 'Mramma/Myanmar', along with the various minority ethnic groups. The last census information from the late 1980's put the Burmans at holding around 58% of the population, with the Shan making up 12%, the Karen comprising 10%, with around 2% each for the Chinese and Indian communities. This leaves a further 16% representing further minority groups, equating to the Burmans holding 58% of the population, and minorities totaling some 42%. The figures are, however, viewed with much discrepancy, as they are believed to have been intentionally distorted by progressive military governments so as to make the Burman percentage of the population larger, somehow justifying their regime and control over the country³¹. The current regime in Yangon has managed to secure large scale investment from foreign companies keen to develop the country's largely untapped natural resources.

Thai and Australian firms have entered the country to develop the forests and log for teak and other hardwoods, and U.S, French and British oil and gas conglomerates have come into Myanmar to drill for oil and natural gas. The controversial Yudana Natural Gas Pipeline built across virgin forests in Tenasserim Division by French and American Oil companies has sparked much worldwide outrage at the forced relocation of tribal groups and the believed use of forced labor. Among the peoples of Burma there are many groups, made up of the Burmans, Shan, Karen, Arakanese (Rakhine), Chin, Kachin, Mon (Talaing), Indian, Chinese and other smaller sub-groupings. Many minor races are included in the Burman figure, and are referred to as Proto-Burmans, Deutero-Burmans and Lolo-Burmans. However, Anglo-Burmans, Anglo-Indians and Eurasians seem to have disappeared from the racial classifications, and are indeed not recognized as minorities in today's Myanmar. Thus it is sadly apparent that few Anglo-Burmans will ever return to take up the places they left behind after the historically recognized 'Eurasian Exodus' from Burma to the UK and other English-speaking nations. Through the current growing trend in the contemporary study of Eurasian communities and the colonial era, previous stereotypes, born primarily from the arrogance and bigotry of the former colonists, of Eurasians as being worthless, lazy and untrustworthy, are being fast eradicated. One such misrepresentation of Eurasians refers to the controversial Merchant Ivory film, 'Cotton Mary' and the play 'Last Dance at South Dum Dum'³². Eurasians are thus increasingly coming to be recognized as they should have been: as an important yet frequently overlooked, misinterpreted and misrepresented legacy of the colonial era.

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3 Myanmar Information Pages: <http://www.myanmars.net>

4 Apa Insight Guide to Burma-Myanmar.

5 See 'The Lacquer Lady' by F Tennyson Jesse. This famous novel details Court life in Mandalay prior to British annexation.

6 'The Jews of the Raj'

7 Supayalat returned to Burma with two of her three children in 1918 after Thibaw's death. She lived out the rest of her days devoting her life to the Buddhist faith on a government stipend.

8 Steel Brothers personnel included many expatriate Britons who married local Burmese.

9 'A World Overturned' - Baird-Murray, Maureen, 1999.

10 Pike, Felicia Maud - 2002.

11 A Karen legend recounts the tale of a man with a white face who would return to them with a lost book and teach them their forgotten tongue. When Christian missionaries arrived with the Bible and the English language, the Karen believed it to be their legend come true. Thus many Karen became Anglicized, adopted Christianity and were less belligerent towards British rule and occupation of the country.

12 The Galon Rebellion took place in rural Burma. Led by Saya San, he and some five thousand Burmese, believing themselves unharmable, charged at British forces and were subsequently cut down and killed by the troops and their guns.

13 Records of the Government of Burma, India Office, London. Eurasian in this case would have included Anglo-Burmans, Anglo-Indians and other mixed groups.

14 Mills, Megan - 1997.

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17 See the speech 'An Address to the Anglo-Burmans' made before the Anglo-Burman Council at Rangoon City Hall, 1946.

18 The Simla Conference, India, 1944. British leaders met with Anglo-Burman representatives to discuss the future of the community in post-war Burma.

19 'Who Killed Aung San?' - British Broadcasting Corporation, 1997-1998.

20 The Burmese Constitution drew heavily from that of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, as well as from that of the Republic of Ireland (Éire).

21 The 'Hluttaw' was a traditional Burmese Council of Ministers dating from the days of King Alaungpaya who founded the Konbaung Dynasty.

22 'The Union of Burma' - Tinker, Hugh.

23 'Burma' - Silverstein, Josef. Non-citizens were not allowed to own property, run businesses or attend University or College.

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31 Recent figures issued on the Myanmar Government website put the Burmans as holding some 68% of the population, an obvious distortion of the truth. <http://www.myanmar.com> or <http://www.gov.mm>

32 Both 'Cotton Mary' and 'Last Dance at South Dum Dum' portray ageing Eurasian communities in India after the end of British Rule, 'Cotton Mary' in the 1950's and 'Last Dance at South Dum Dum' in the 1990's. Obsessed with all things British whilst rejecting all that is and is related to India, they both portray the Eurasian communities as remaining vehemently anti-Indian in the new society.